

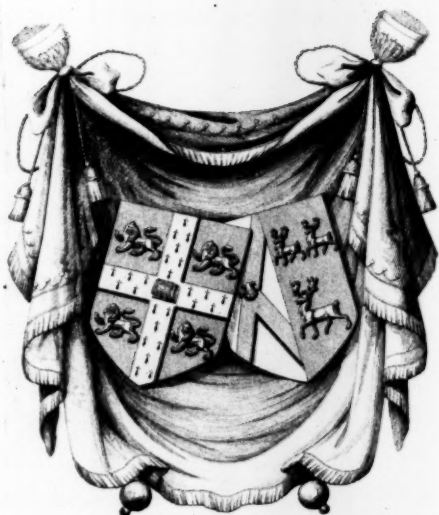
THE 7341.42
Private Christian's
WITNESS
FOR
Christianity:

In Opposition to the
Notional and Erroneous Apprehensions
OF THE
Arminian, Socinian, and Deist
of the AGE.

With the Easy and True Means leading the
Prophane, Meer Professor, and Lazy Chri-
stian, to the same Experience, as Preservative
against the Infection of each, and against
the ill Example of the Practical Blemishes
in Lazy Christians Conversation.

L O N D O N :

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T H E
PREFACE

B Y A

Friend of the Author's.

SINCE the Fall of Man by his Rebellious Sin, he incurr'd the forfeiture of his Felicity, that principally consisted in Communion with God.

The Divine Goodness is like a sealed Fountain, all comforting Emanations are obstructed : Divine Justice is a consuming Fire to all guilty and polluted Creatures. The Son of God by his precious Merits and Intercession, is a Mediator of Reconciliation and Communion.

All our Ascents to God in spiritual Duties, and his Descents to us by communicating Graces and Comforts, are through Christ. He introduces our Persons into the Divine Presence, he purifies our Services from their Defilements and Defects, and presents them with acceptance to his Father.

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Our

The P R E F A C E

Our Communion with God is managed by the Influences of the Holy Spirit into the Soul, and the returns of the Soul to God by the Energy and Efficacy of the Spirit. In all the parts of Divine Worship, the Spirit composes the Mind, with the Reverence of God's invisible and adorable Majesty : He encourages our trust in his Mercy, and raises our Affections from Earth to Heaven. This is a difficult height which the carnal Nature cannot arrive to. Prayer is a Duty of daily Revolution, but cannot be performed in an acceptable manner without the Spirit's Assistance.

The Holy Spirit is the Seal of God's Love to Believers, that can never be cancell'd; that distinguishes them from the unrenewed World, and appropriates them to God. He first works those Graces in the Soul, wherein the Image of God consists, and by illustrating them in the view of Conscience, witnesses that they are God's Children : He is therefore styled *the Spirit of Adoption*.

The Spirit ratifies the Truth of the Gospel to those who have felt his sanctifying and comforting Operations. There are some Doctrines in the Gospel of impossible discovery by the light of Reason, and when reveal'd, are incomprehensible. Now there is such Evidence, beyond all exception, That the Gospel is a Divine Revelation ; that any
Doctrine

by a Friend of the Author.

Doctrines declared in it, though sublime and supernatural, and contrary to our carnal Prejudices and Passions, justly requires our assent to it. We must distinguish between the evidence of the Object, and the evidence of the testimony. An Object is evident by its own Light, and the impression it makes immediately on the Mind: Thus it discerns between Truth and Falshood, between what is fair, and what is fraudulent; as the Eye sees the difference between the day and night. The Evidence of the Testimony, is, when the proof of the Truth is resolved into the Veracity and Authority of God, who is Infallible; For he cannot be deceived nor deceive. Now of the Gospel's Divine Original, there are external Characters and Signs, and internal: Of the external Characters, Miracles are the most conspicuous: Of the internal, the sanctifying and comforting Operations of the Spirit in the Souls of Men are most sensible and convincing. For certainly humane Nature, tho' assisted by Moral Counsels and Constancy, could never produce such Divine Effects. The Holiness and Comfort that the Spirit in Concomitancy with the Gospel, works in sincere Christians, produces a more clear and strong assurance of its Truth, than the sight of Miracles. For Holiness is an Attribute as truly Divine as Power, and has a nearer Affinity with the Nature of God, 'tis his peculiar Glory. The cleansing

The P R E F A C E

and changing the Heart of a Sinner, the calming of the afflicted Conscience, are a more eminent effect of Power, than the turning of a Wilderness into a Paradise, or the laying Storms and Tempests. The sanctifying and comforting Virtue of the Spirit by the Word, is a more inward and lasting proof than Miracles. A Miracle, like a sudden flash of Lightning, astonishes Men at the present, and causes them to consider what is proposed; but when the surprize is over, they may neglect their Duty: But real Holiness in the heart and life, like the Sun, irradiates the Mind with a constant light; *He that believes has the witness within himself.*

Inward Experimental Religion is perceived by the Sense of them that have it, and cannot be so clearly demonstrated by Words. Who can see a Taste? From hence many ignorant and prophane Persons expose the Operations of the Spirit to ignominy and contempt, as the dotages of Enthusiasts. And Doctrinal Professors, who owe their Religion to Tradition and Education, and are meerly Titular Christians, cannot understand and believe what the Saints really enjoy. They are hardened in their Unbelief, because many have father'd the bastards of their deluded fancies upon the Spirit. But to shew the unreasonableness of this pretence, consider, It were strange that the low life of Sense has perceptive Faculties, that living Creatures feel that they live, and
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by a Friend of the Author's.

the spiritual Life, more raised and excellent than the rational, should not perceive it self. Is it possible there should be such a Prodigy, that the Soul should live the life of Holiness and Joy, like a Plant, without the knowledge of it? Or, Because many are deceived with a false Light, and pleased with a Delusion, does it follow that those who have vital Experience of Religion, are deceived? One may Dream that he is Awake, but a Man that is Awake knows himself to be so: The Delusion of one doth not weaken the assurance of another. If it be enquir'd, How shall we distinguish between the Genuine Operations of the Spirit, and the Spurious and Counterfeit? A clear answer may be given. 1. By the light of the Spirit we may discover and know his Operations. This is no vicious Circle. I know I have a reasonable Soul, by the light of Reason: For the Understanding that discovers other objects in the direct act, is the object of it self in the reflective act. Thus I know that I have the Holy Spirit as a principle of Divine life acting in me by the light of the Spirit. 2. It is the peculiar Character of the Spirit's Operations, they are all in Consent and Congruity with the Word of God, for he is the Inditer of the Word, and cannot contradict himself: They make Men more Holy and Heavenly; and as the Star directed the Wise-Men to Christ, the light of the Spirit

The PREFACE

rit always directs us to him as the Fountain of Grace and Salvation.

And for the satisfaction of those who desire to know when the Blessings they receive are obtain'd by Prayer, and are not the effects of God's general Providence; I shall only desire them to consider, whether their Prayers are by the Spirit's Influence, which is known by the frame of the Soul in that Duty. The Spirit knows the Mind of God, and is the Intelligencer of Heaven; he directs us to the most favourable Seasons, and by soft Whispers and warm Impulses, brings us in God's Presence to pray for Mercies when God is ready to bestow them. He does with sensible Enlargements open our Hearts in the Duty; And as under the Law, when Fire fell from Heaven upon the Sacrifice, 'twas a sign of God's Acceptance; so when a sacred Fire kindles our Affections, 'tis a sign our Requests are accepted. He mixes in our Prayers Reverence with filial Confidence; Resignation to the Will and Wisdom of God, with Reliance upon his Love and Power. And when a Mercy is bestow'd, the Spirit converts our Prayers into Praises, and by the Mercy, confirms our Faith, inflames our Love, and endears Obedience to us.

Concerning the Person of whom the following Papers give an account, I shall only say, He is a Christian inwardly, who has had
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by a Friend of the Author.

a stated Intercourse with Heaven, and has recorded the gracious Passages of Providence; the rich Returns of Prayer to him. 'Tis true, there is a continual Succession of Mercies through all the minutes of our lives, which we cannot observe and remember; but as there is a different Glory in the lights of Heaven, *One Glory of the Sun, another of the Moon, and another of the Stars*; so some are eminent and illustrious above others, and ought to be remembred and acknowledg'd with Solemnity.

Of these Mercies he has been deeply sensible, and could not be silent, but opens the Treasures of his Experiences, and with *David*, the great Pattern of Thankfulness, calls upon those that Fear the Lord, to Read what he has done for his Soul. His end is, to Glorifie his Blessed Benefactors, and to invite others to partake of the same Mercy. May his Example excite us with diligence and delight to maintain Communion with God on Earth, the sweet and sure anticipation and earnest of our Communion with him in his Temple above, where Light, and Love, and Joy, shine in their perfection for ever.

To the Reader.

WHO amongst the adopted Sons of God, can behold the abounding Vice of the Prophanes, the profession of Christianity made a Cloak for Sin and Error, and the laziness of Christians lives in our day, and not awaken our selves to hear God speaking in the same language to us, as to the children of Israel, Isa. 43. 10. You are my witnesses. Is God's Divine Providence practically deny'd or retrench'd, when so much thereof is in the constant view of the sons of men? Is the Word of Truth deny'd by a Sectary of Deists, when so much thereof is felt as real in the Souls of Christians? Is the Godhead of Christ, with the Being of a Divine Spirit, so audaciously and prophanely deny'd, when those who have experienced the priviledges of the satisfaction of the first, by the powerful application of the latter, witness the reality of both? I am resolved therefore to make no other Apology for my Printing the following Discourse, than that it is in obedience to the Apostle's charge to all Believers in the 10th verse of the 4th Chapter of the first Epistle of Peter, As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the

To the READER.

the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. *What I have imparted, I have receiv'd, and in these gradual steps, and in the use of these means treated of in the first and latter part of the Discourse; and therefore in the imparting of what God has done for my Soul, and by what means, I hope I stand his witness this day on the earth, and approve my self a faithful Steward in ministring the same things to others, and that in the way wherein they were received. There seems to be a Confederacy between Satan and the men of this Age, to discredit the Oracles of God, but his Word is a firm foundation of Faith; and sincere Christians clearly see the Characters of its Divinity, and feel the sanctifying comforting efficacy of it, and many have seal'd its truth with their blood: Others in their dying hours, when men speak with most feeling, and least affectation, have declared their unshaken belief of it; and others, in converse with those they most dearly love, and therefore would not deceive. Each Christian therefore is under obligation to glorify God according to their measure of experience concerning God and his Divine Truths. All are not in the office of the Ministry; and there seems in our day but small opportunity in conversation to witness for Christianity. Converse with the Profane is of so dangerous consequence, that discourse of such things occasion God and his Truth to be mock'd, yea, to my certain knowledge blasphemed. Converse with some under the character of greater Sobriety, draws forth such open confidence*

TO the READER.

in Error, as to tell us God's Word, the Rule of our Faith, is to be laid aside, and Debates in Christianity are to be left off, at the first Chapter of Genesis; they giving no credit to its Truths than so far as their natural Reason can comprehend; whereas the Soul was corrupted in all its faculties by the Fall. Although in the structure of the world, and its preservation, with the various turns of Providence, there are clear discoveries of the Divine Maker; yet how little advance did the wise Philosopher make to that perfection of Soul which was in man before the Fall, or to that that is obtain'd under the influencing light of the Scripture, and the Divine Spirit, or shall be in man plac'd in a state of glory? And though God has added to us his blessed Scripture in conjunction with the works of Creation and Providence, to exercise our thoughts upon, for the perfecting of our knowledge, yet to what little advancement do many attain in the understanding of God and Divine Mysteries! Therefore our compassionate Father in Christ, sensible of our weakness in the real and firm understanding of Divine Things, has given forth another help to our dark Souls in conjunction with the former, even his Divine Spirit, teaching us all truth, and helping us to a rest and reliance upon his Word, working in us a sense and feeling of those great and marvellous mysteries for preparing our Souls towards the more full and glorious perception of them. The Revelation in the Old Testament was like the morning-light, mixt with the shades of the night; the Revelation in the
New

TO the READER.

New Testament is clear day; but the Revelation of God and Christ in Heaven, is like the Sun at noon in its full lustre. If this therefore has been God's gradual method to restore men, and we enjoy so bright a discovery of mercy to save us, those who refuse to accept it, cannot escape the condemnation due as the recompence of it, the dwelling in darkness with the children of darkness and disobedience for ever; Rom. 2. If those who have had no other help in the understanding of the invisible things of God, besides the beholding of created things, are left without excuse for not improving that light, and being obedient to it; How much more inexcusable shall they be who have the light of Life shining upon them, do not believe the Supernatural Truths revealed by it, and will rather charge the Doctrines of the Gospel with Impossibility, than acknowledge the narrowness of their understandings? Converse with some real Christians in a way of Experience is greatly laid aside; feasting, discoursing the common affairs of the Nation, the recommendation of Self-notions in Religion, and the disparaging of others, are put in the room of such Conference; that the serious Christian putting in sentences of experimental Religion is immediately repulsed, with the pleasing, though lazy, Excuse, of Experiences being too nice and dangerous to be talk'd of, which perhaps is found so, when either triflingly observed, or liass'd with the vicious design of applause, and mutual instruction and comfort out of the Soul's aim.

Printing

TO the READER.

Printing therefore I have made choice of. Its commonness and unsuccessfulness in the hands of the most Learned and most Holy of God's Children had greatly discourag'd me, if God's special method of discovering Himself and his Word to my Soul, and that in so short a while, had not put me under a greater obligation than ordinary to witness for him, when so many bear false witness against his Attributes and Revealed Will. And therein I design not to debate the Reality of Inward Religion, (being come, blessed be his Name, to full establishment and assurance thereof) but to tell you, That Christianity is somewhat else than an outward Profession, more powerful in its dominion than the by-ends of Applause, outward Interest, or the strength of Education, and never to be understood by corrupt Reason alone, without the help of Divine Revelation, and a Divine Spirit; and to convince hereof, I design not sensible demonstration, but first of all to give you a Narrative of some Mysteries experienc'd, I formerly was unacquainted with as Evidences of an inward change, and of the life of Religion to be between God and the Soul; my outward Conversation while under the power of Education, having been in great measure as unblameable in appearance as now.

2. To tell you the Means made effectual to enlighten my dark mind to understand the reality of Divine Spiritual Mysteries, that so you walking in the same road, may meet with the same knowledge of God and his Word as true, and then you'll bid adieu to all your spreading Errors, and find them rather confir-

TO the READER.

confirmation to Christianity, than shaking to your Faith, (Resemblance being generally a Companion to Reality) you'll be chang'd from co-operating with Satan, to the pleasing of him and your own inward Lust; to the working together with God, pleasing of him, and the obtaining Salvation to your Souls.

Farewell.

Page 137. after Line 3. add what here follows;

A second Argument to persuade to the Duty of Observation, is, That it is introductory to greater matter of Observation. 'Tis known to all observing Christians, That the more they have observed, the greater things have been brought to their view, and lesser Providences remark'd, have led to greater; the smallest step a Christian makes toward God, it's greatly encouraged by him, and he will enable us to further Progress in his ways. How evident is this from Christ's words to Nathanael, *Believest thou because I said, I saw thee under the fig-tree? thou shalt see greater things, heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the son of man.*

By the observation of outward Providences, you will see God in the Blessings he bestows: Jacob when he met his Brother Esau, Gen. 33. 10. says with a Rapture of Affection, *I have seen thy face, as tho I had*

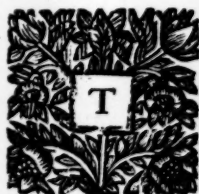
had seen the face of God: This at first view looks almost like Blasphemy; but in *Esau's* reconciled face to him, he saw the Face, Presence, and Favour of God; the principal Object was not so much *Esau's* reconciliation to him, as the Favour and Hand of God in bringing it about; this raised his Spirit to such an Exclamation: Such a sight of God in the going forth of his Divine Providence, necessarily supposes its Observation. Is it therefore possible to observe means probable of bringing forth such designs, but made unsuccessful? The contrivances of the Wise brought to other ends than they purposed? The evil Craftiness of others to their Dishonour and Ruin, when design'd for their Honour and Preferment? Yea, means in appearance tending to hurt, bringing forth great good? Is it possible, I say, to observe these things, and not to discover another Power above Human Policy to contrive, or Human Strength to effectuate? Even the Sovereign Power of an Infinite God, who many times determines Events contrary to mens designs, but still for the bringing forth his own.

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Private Christian's

Witness for CHRISTIANITY, &c.



THE following Discourse I divide into Two Parts : The First, Contains an Historical Account of my self, under no other Religion than that of Education, with the outward Providences, and inward Workings of a Divine Spirit, changing me from thence to a sensible feeling of a more inward powerful Principle than that of Education ; opening a door of Knowledge of God, of Divine Mysteries, of my own State before, and of my present State thus Enlightened.

The Second, Contains an Application thereof to the Prophane and meer Professor, or unto the real, though lazy Christian.

B

First,

First, I begin with the Narrative, and take this Account of my self under no other power of Christianity than the effect of Religious Education: One Born within the Pale of the Church, instructed in the knowledge of the True Principles of the Christian Religion, and enabled to discourse of them; with the Character of knowing the Things of God, (tho' but Notionally then;) Trained up with the continued Example of performing all the Duties of Hearing, Reading, and Praying, with that powerful influence, that publick or private Devotion were seldom neglected, but not diligent and serious in the perusal of the Scriptures; Besides, all this under the advantage of Religious Conversation and Holy Practice, was so powerfully impressing, that in the course of my Life, never one single act of the common Vices of Drinking, Swearing, or Uncleaness, tainted my Conversation: Yea, the impression continued so strong, as after my departure from under this strictness of instruction and example, still the same exactness in Duties and Conversation remain'd, tho' Youthful Temptations surrounded me. God's restraining Grace was my preservative; and my natural desire to be in Business was a means of preventing the impression of Temptations; yet still I was in the dark as to the saving knowledge of True Christianity, or the inward power of Grace sensibly acting in the Soul; my natural disposition in-

inclining me more to Observation, than to much Talk in Conversation, led me not only to observe the Discourse and Actions of others, but even to remark the Events attending my Life, with Reflections thereupon, without any regard to it as Duty, or productive of the knowledge of Divine Things, but purely as the effect of natural Curiosity, inducing me both to observe and to record them with great pleasure in reviewing them; and finding the more I observ'd, the greater and more numerous things were presented to me, I became stricter in observing things of great and smaller moment. While I continued in this practice, a Dispensation of Providence occur'd, that induced me not to trust in my self, or second Causes, but by a fiducial assent to the Being of a God in his full governing Power, as to Persons and Things, with a full desire of being interest'd in the favour of this Great and Omnipotent God, to live in an entire dependance upon Him.

The Providence was as follows: Being call'd to attempt a matter of great concern, (that many far excelling me in Age, rational Judgment, and natural Activity, had endeavour'd, though unsuccessfully, to bring about) I brought the Business, and that in a very few days, to all seeming probability of success; but being obliged by a Providential Occasion to be absent, and to appear where those that had try'd their endeavour to no effect did usually reside, I found the progress I had already made, with

the prospect of perfecting the matter, had so increased the esteem of my self, that disparaging of those, was the Game I then exercised my self withal; but returning to the place where the Business was to be performed, matters were altogether chang'd for the worst; and upon enquiry of the time this change happen'd, (my custom of Observation having brought me to some more than ordinary curiosity in it) I found it exactly answering the time my Lust of Pride put forth its Tyranny in my Conversation; and stepping from the Floor to my Bed, that very night, this Suggestion suddenly and strongly darted into my Mind; That by my ill return to God's Kindness, affording such hopes of success, in detracting from Him the Praise that was entirely due for such an eminent Providence, and in not retaining an humble Sense of my own Unworthiness and Insufficiency, I had provoked the Lord thus to turn the course of the Affair, immediately convincing me who it was that had made me to differ from others of more promising Abilities than I, and impressing my Mind with great seriousness of Thought, and force to Prayer, begging Pardon from Him, and His further assistance in the matter, with a full resolution of looking to God, extolling Him, and debasing my self in the success. My Prayer was immediately return'd, evident by the great alteration that immediately happened, as a sweet Condescension of God to train a poor Creature to the Knowledge of Himself, and to delight in Him;

Him ; but in a weeks time more, being call'd to the same place as before, I found the same Self-applause return: This was a full conviction to me of the great need of continued supplies of Heaven after the greatest confirmations of God's Love to preserve us from forgetting his Mercies, or repeating failures; and correspondent to this, the same unsuccessful turn happened in the affair, which was so powerfully bore home upon my Soul, that I could not but see God with favour in one hand and punishment in another; marvellous Mercy in bringing me to the sense of my failure, and the repetition of my Address to Heaven; Punishment in withholding his assistance, the just merit of my forgetfulness, and of my repeated failure: Upon Address to God by serious and sincere Prayer, with unfeign'd Confession, the Business turn'd again with a favourable aspect of success; suitable to the Psalmist, *I confessed my Sin, and thou forgavest the Iniquity, or Punishment, of my Sin*; And at last by his Divine Assistance, attain'd a final and perfect success, though between my first undertaking and this final issue, there was four turns of Providence exactly answering my Soul's posture.

From hence I date my first sence of inward serious thoughtfulness of passages of Divine Providence; of minding God in all undertakings, with an entire dependance upon him for conduct to the right use of means, and for a Divine Blessing to make them successful, of the

certainty of access to him ; for this very end, with a distrust of self-sufficiency, all which met as it were in a moment in my Soul, by the Spirit of God's bearing home this passage upon me : But from the Observation of God's further method of outward Providence and inward Workings of his Spirit, I have found that these were but little glimmerings of light, an Eye beginning to be open'd after a sound and secure sleep. God having marvellously enlightn'd my Eyes since, and made me to see what before I knew only in the notion, enabling me to discourse thereof ; but what now, I hope, I may say I have felt, and am well assured of, even the truth of an inward change upon the Soul, putting it self forth with such power, as to hinder Thought, Words and Actions to run in the same course from the same principle, or towards the same end as before, but to tread according to a Rule, not of self, but of God's Will.

I could subjoin many circumstances of this Providence here related, that might marvellously affect the Reader ; yea, other Providences, concerning the Lord's first exciting designs, as well as his method in bringing them successfully about, were it not that I am unwilling to be known to the World, and that for these Reasons.

First, That Mockers at, and Unbelievers of these great things experimental Religion has made known to my Soul, may not prejudice themselves by imagining shew, self-commendation

dation and applause at the bottom of this design, the faithful aim thereof being to bring men off their reliance upon notional Religion, and their trusting to their rational conclusions, as fittest means to inform them of Christianity, or to their own strength as sufficient help to the right performance of Gospel Duties ; and to lead them to the vital part of Christianity, experiences therein, not to be maintain'd by notional knowledge or quarrelling Debates, but by a serious and strict use of means God commonly imparts the experience of himself and his Word by ; The Lord has given forth great Truths to be tryed and experienced in the Christian Soul, but we are not at the pains either to observe them, or by mutual converse to confirm one another in the truth of them.

A Second Reason is, Lest it prove Temptation to my self, exciting a corrupt Principle within to puffing up, whereas great Humility is the companion of such Experiences when first felt in the Soul, and ought to be preserv'd in imparting them to others, lest we our selves be exalted above measure, or ingage others to think of us above what we are.

Again, this change wrought in my Soul, *is the Lord's own doing* ; let it therefore in its declaration glorifie him by Confirming some, and Instructing others, without any knowledge of my self therein, but with full discovery of the actings of a Divine Spirit.

This Seriousness brought forth by the means of so remarkable an outward Providence in the Hand of God, was soon accompanied with some sensible Changes never felt formerly, but then so visible as forced me to commit them to a Diary; some whereof were as follows.

First, An Eye to God in all Things, a Petitioning of Him for all Things, with some beginnings of Resignation to his Will in all events. It was not as before, a trusting to nothing but what was sensible, a distraction of Thoughts to find out this or the other instrument to bring about such an event; but now I could hope in things unseen; and instead of hurrying of Thoughts to find out means to bring about an event, I began the pursuit of a design with serious address to Heaven, for conduct to my self in the use of means, and for a Blessing to the event according to his Pleasure; enlargement in Prayer was not at this time understood, only when an endeavour in the use of means and with address to God, was made successful, I could not but observe it, with some excitements to love this God that had given me my Heart's Desire, and that in answer to Prayer; which brought me,

Secondly, To some Trust to God; Sense begun to be out of favour, whereas formerly I could encourage my self in nothing but what was either in possession, or in all probability certain; now there were some sparklings of Trust to God, and Love to Him I had been so obliged to

to by his Blessings, Endeavours, and answering of Prayers, which would often raise that reflection in my Thoughts, how gratefully and dutifully I ought to endeavour the pleasing of him, whose Strength was my Assistance, whose Ear was so open to my address, which prov'd a sensible mean of bringing me,

Thirdly, To a diligent search of the Scriptures, therein to know his Will, and by endeavouring conformity thereto, to please him who had made himself to be observ'd thus loving, whereas formerly with Historical delight only the Scriptures were made use of by me; my Thoughts then run pleasantly after the Practical meaning, as well as the Notional Knowledge of them; at which time the 15th *Psalm* throughout greatly accompanied my Thoughts, and enclin'd me for some considerable time to breathe forth continual Petitions for practical Conformity to it.

Fourthly, Great exercise of Hatred to those Sins that usually did beset me. While under the impression of Education, and Religious Example, and sober Society, my outward life was free from single acts of common Vice; yet upon the sense and feeling of an inward change, a long roll of inward Corruptions I discover'd, that the World and I were not judges of, tho' then they offer'd themselves fully to my view.

Fifthly, An inward seriousness of Thoughts, as well as outward gravity in performance of Duties,

ties, aiming then at pleasing God in the parts of his Worship.

Sixthly, A serious free affection towards Holy Christians, the least degree whereof I never had formerly any evidence, their Conversation in Christianity having often prov'd confinement and burthensome, unless where Relation and Friendship made it less tiresome: The first sensible evidence whereof discover'd it self in my Carriage towards some who had falsly reproach'd me with an Aspersion base in its Nature, and likely to be injurious to one against whom I had determin'd Prosecution; but this inward change happening in the mean while, both my malice and resolution of Revenge ceased at once, with some uneasiness of mind, till I had discoursed the thing with themselves, and given them my own sense of its ill management, they having been bound in conformity to God's Divine Word to have imparted the reproach first to my self, by doing whereof its falshood would have been known, and their spreading of a false reproach to the injury of others might have been prevented; a caution to all Religious Professors giving too great heed to common Reproaches, and too great way to their spreading them in Conversation. My Malice and resolved Revenge were turn'd into affectionate Inclinations and good Actions; after which instant, a delight in Converse with Christians, though mean in outward circumstances, was more pleasing to me than all the hurrying joy of Companions abroad, when

when at any time oblig'd to be witness there-to.

Seventhly, A surprising compassion towards the Poor, with continual Ejaculatory Praise, that my Station was otherwise than theirs; even when going along the Streets or Roads, if objects of Charity presented themselves, this frame of praising God was immediately upon me, blessing him for my being in other Circumstances than theirs, of want or bodily Imperfections; with a watch over my self, lest in my Charity desire of applause, or any degree of unwillingness had appear'd. Charity to be seen of men receives its reward when view'd by men; unwillingness therein spoils it in its nature, and takes off all expectation of a reward.

Eighthly, A clearer sense of the Work of Redemption, and of Christ the Redeemer. Tho' I had the Notional Knowledge, and Historical Faith of both, yet in Prayer or Meditation, my admiring Thoughts of free Grace, and my words of Praise for its effects upon the Soul, would continually center upon God the Father; yea, in Prayer there always would appear a constraint from giving any distinct Worship to Christ, for his adorable love in the Work of Redemption, and that for some time after the sensible evidence of this inward Charge, which was an opportunity to Satan, to argue against the Deity of Christ, if God's restraining Power had not chain'd his Malice from trampling upon that tender Plant of Grace, beginning
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to bud forth; and tho' Satan was under constraint as to any Assault or Victory of this kind; yet I found an uneasiness and dissatisfaction in my self for not being enabled to give Admiration and Prayers, centering upon God the Son, as well as upon God the Father, which made me impart my concern of Mind to several Ministers of eminent Gifts, but had Instruction from none, save one, who thus answer'd me out.

No wonder (*says he*) our Love and Admiration, our Prayers and Praises run most towards God the Father, these being as a natural Tribute, which in nature we allow to God as Creator and Preserver of us. Whereas a saving Eye to Christ as Redeemer, or as God, in Worship seems more the effect of the Blessed and Divine Spirit. Which answer was accompanied at the time with some satisfaction of Mind; but soon after this inward Change put forth such strong and numerous evidences with heart-service in the parts of Divine Worship, as well as outward Gravity therein, that self-sufficiency was laid aside, and hope entirely dependent upon Christ's Satisfaction as the Fountain of all Gospel Priviledges, was raised, with a clear apprehension of Christ's Satisfaction, and with a distinct Worship of him in Prayer; from whence I was easily confirm'd, that under the incapacity of Worshipping Christ as God, I was not under the saving sensible power of Christianity;

anity ; but that now under this saving change of Soul, producing, among other things, a clear view of Christ, the foundation of our rich Privileges, I could perform a distinct worship of Christ in Prayer, and do hope that I am under the instruction and inward power of that Divine Spirit, whom he has promised should guide us unto all Truth in the use of his means ; *John* 14. 26. What is a guide otherwise in Nature and way of power upon the Soul, than that the product only of religious Education, and of the Notional Knowledge of Christianity ?

As by the word of Truth, with a frequent use of the Sacrament, so by this very experience, I have been wonderfully established in the truth of the Godhead of Christ, against all the *Socinianism* falsehoods of the men of this Age ; in that Duty of the Holy Sacrament I have often been so ravish'd with the Contemplation of Christ's Love in himself as God and Man, that at the very time I have been in great exercise of pity towards those poor Creatures who deny his Godhead ; and have oft thought with my self, that unacquaintance with themselves on God's own word, experience in their Soul, was the occasion of their distrust of Christ as God. How weak are the *Socinian* Arguments against our Blessed Redeemer as God ? And tho they be prevalent upon some unacquainted with God's word, at least not experimentally felt as truth upon their Souls, yet they are easily to be repell'd by the Scriptural discovery of Christ's

Two distinct Natures in One Person for ever. And how much more weak will they appear at that blessed day of Resurrection, when they shall see him in his perfect Glory, as God-Man, Redeemer of lost Man, and the Judge of them that would not comprehend him as a Glorious God.

What is more plain than that Scriptural evidence of the Godhead of Christ in the First Epistle of *John*, chap. 5. v. 20? *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us understanding that we might know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Christ Jesus; this is the true God, and eternal life; if we are in him, ingrafted by the operation of his Divine Spirit, we shall draw forth such knowledge of him both as certainly come, against all the Jews on Earth; and as God, and Eternal Life, against all the Socinians at this day; from my own experience. I desire to put my poor Seal to this Scripture-truth, discoverable in what I have already laid before you. I do believe, That the Professor of Christianity turning Socinian, never knew Christ any other way than by a notional Knowledge, pleasing to its self, but never feeling that saving-knowledge of him by the work of a Divine Spirit in the use of means, planting or watering Grace in the Soul.*

John c. 1. v. 3. All things were made by him, and in v 10. The world was made by him, and it knew him not, undoubtedly therefore he made
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up one of them, *Gen. i. 26.* who said, *Let us make man*; one in Nature, though three Persons distinct; Is not the Soul a Man? One in Essence, tho' different in its Faculties, of Judgment, Will and Affections.

Colos. ch. i. v. 14, 15, 16. By him, to wit, the Son that Redeemed us, the Image of God, the first born from the Dead, all things were Created, he was before all things, and all things consist by him, which are never applicable to Christ unless he be God as well as Man.

Again, God's attribute of Omnipotence could never be appropriated to him, if he were not God as well as Man. *John 2. 24.* But Jesus did not commit himself to them, because he knew all Men. *John 6. 64.* For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believ'd not, and who should betray him. In the sixth verse of the same Chapter, it is said, *That Jesus knew he had been a long time in that case.*

Isaiah 8. 13. Sanctifie the Lord of Host, let him be your fear and dread, he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to both houses of Israel: Who is this Lord of Hosts that is to be a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence? It is express'd in the ninth Chapter of the *Romans* and 32 Verse, *They stumbled at the stumbling-stone.*

Isaiah, c. 6. Who can read it throughout and compare it with the 12th chapter of *John v. 38.* and not be convinced of the Deity of Christ? therefore they could not believe because *Isaiah* said,

said, *He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see and be converted*, as is set down in the latter part of that 6th Chapter of *Isaiah*; and in the 41st verse of the same chapter of *John*, it is express'd, *These things said Isaiah when he saw his glory*, and spake of him, as in the former part of that 6th chapter he did express it, *Sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, his train filling the temple, Seraphims standing above it, crying one to another, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory*; by the comparing of both Chapters its plain, that it was Christ that is thus described; and whether such a description be applicable to meer man, I leave it to any Christian to judge of.

Without further running over the Scriptures attesting the Divinity of Christ, or further enlarging upon the personal experience of freeness of worship to him in Prayer, and other Duties, in that change of Soul wherein Faith to Christ was implanted, I'll only add one Scripture more, not only accusing of *Socinians* themselves, but these of Christ's Flock, who encourage their Erroneous Doctrine by too familiar converse with their persons: It is the 2d Epistle of *John*, the 9th and 10th verses, *Who abides not in the Doctrine of Christ, hath not God*; and if that of his being God, but now made out, be not one great part of the Doctrine of Christ, I know not how we shall understand his satisfaction of God as is described in his word: In the 10th verse
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it is said, *If any deceivers come unto you and bring not this Doctrine, receive them not in your house, neither bid them speed*; both being an argument of Familiarity, but justly reproof those who are so far from giving such discouragement to Deceivers, that if by them can be diverted Splenetick Vapours by acuteness of their Wit and diverting Conversation, they shall have as great, if not greater room in their Society or Houses, as those whose delight is to communicate and discourse the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Grace. By this means we hug the tools of spreading Errors in our Bosoms.

To proceed in the Narrative of God's further method of carrying on this great inward change in the use of his usual means, I shall *First* of all lay before you the Experiences of the certainty of the Souls access to God in Prayer, of the seriousness of frame therein, that the prophane and meer Professor, though never so outwardly Religious, are altogether unacquainted with; the experiences of the certainty of Christ's Spirit interceding in us in Prayer, and of the correspondency thereof to God's return.

Secondly, Experiences of God's method of working sensibly, and fructifying Faith and Reliance upon himself.

Thirdly, Experiences of the with-holding Divine Influences in Prayer.

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Fourthly,

Fourthly, Experiences of God's method of training the Soul to right hearing of the Word, and participation of the Lord's Supper.

Experiences of the First, take in the following Order.

My First Experience leading me to the certainty of what is express'd above, was, That when providentially call'd to the undertaking of any matter of great concern and difficulty, that then, according to the fervency and powerfulness of Soul carrying me forth to supplicate, so encouragement has accompanied the management of such an *Affair*; and when endeavour has been to be continued in, according to the continuance or intermission of this frame, so encouragement or discouragement has appeared; some instances whereof I have experienced in the following method, where the endeavour has been of three days duration. The first day I have been Heavenlyly carried out in Prayer; the next two days this frame has been remov'd, and the matter either neglected in Prayer, or superficially given up to God; And upon the examination of the success of Means throughout those three days, I have found eminent success the companion of the first days Endeavour; but in the use of the two following days Endeavour, a perfect discouragement, and that exactly answering the two different postures of Soul that Prayer in these different days was put up to Heaven in.

A Second Experience was, when in one Prayer I have Petition'd the Lord concerning two different matters; and Pleading for the one, my Thoughts have been ravishingly carried forth; but supplicating for the other, a damp has been upon my mind, and neither life or vigour in its frame, nor freedom of words in utterance concerning it; Praying then no otherwise than while under the power of Education, and ignorant of any inward change of Soul by the power of a Divine Spirit; and in the enquiry have found, that the design and desire Spiritually given up to God's Divine conduct, has been successfully brought about; but that the other was without imminent probability, or real and certain success.

A Third Experience was, When my frame of Mind has been cold, listless and lazy, continuing thus throughout a Prayer, excepting one Petition that suddenly has seized my Thoughts, and has been in sweet Heavenliness of frame put up, yea, so seriously and powerfully put up to God, unconceivable by any unacquainted with fellowship with God in Prayer, the Petitions before and after having been askt of God with great coldness of frame, and constraint of words; but this to which God was to return an answer, and for which strength was conveyed to Petition, corresponded a visible and eminent return of Prayer, without the least measure of answer to the other parts of Prayer thus coldly given up to God.

Many instances of these Experiences I could bring forth, and that fully discovering the nature of them more plainly; but fear of being known, confining me, I shall only lay before you one, which was marvellous in my eyes at the time, and has often been repeated in my Experience since.

Having been for some days engaged in endeavouring to obtain a design of great moment, in the diligent use of all visible means, that only excepted of giving it up to Heaven by Prayer; I resolv'd one afternoon to go abroad on purpose to know the success of means made use of; but after walking down one pair of Stairs, there suddenly seiz'd me an unexpressible force to return, that I might first Petition the Lord concerning it; and bowing my Knees, a sweet serious frame seiz'd my Mind, and my Thoughts were carried forth with great warmth and freedom of utterance concerning the matter: After this Address to God, and going forth, I found that the least degree or shadow of success had never appeared till that very time, in which I was under so undesign'd and sudden a force to Prayer, and with so Heavenly a frame therein; the times of both so exactly answer'd one another, that I was under a meaning Meditation of the thing, clearly evincing of a Power above ones self.

The circumstances in this instance most remarkable, were, first, sudden and prevalent force to Prayer, undesign'd by previous Meditation,

tation, and altogether different from that of a sudden remembrance of any thing forgot, but very suitable to the exciting-methods of Christ's Spirit, and quickning Influences upon the Soul, raising it out of a dead frame, or exciting it to Duties omitted or carelessly performed. *Psal. 65.*

4. *Blessed is the man whom thou causest to approach unto thee*; and if this was not causing me to approach him, never any motion was; visible by the sudden and strong excitement to that Duty formerly omitted, and by imparting Divine Strength to petition concerning it, in Prayer, and to resist the corrupted reluctance to it.

A Second Thing remarkable in the instance, was, the struggle in my self at the first excitement to Prayer, between an inclination and aversion to returning, with the victorious strength of Divine influence, bringing me to a willing performance of the Duty; which circumstance prov'd amongst the first, to confirm my Faith in the reality of there being a law in the Members warring against that law of the Mind.

A Third Circumstance in the instance, was, The exact correspondency of the time of Excitement, and Heavenliness in Prayer, to the time of the real, tho' unexpected success; a circumstance greatly discovering Self-insufficiency in the use of means, without Divine conduct therein, and Trust to God for the Event.

The Fourth Experience concerning Prayer, was, when any failure observ'd in Thought, Word or Action, and accompanied with concern of Mind, and great Spirituality in Prayer in acknowledging it to God; that then I have found, as its immediate concomitant, the uneasiness and concern perfectly gone off, with full quiet possessing my Thoughts, and the exercise of greater watch its consequent, confirming the truth of the 6th and 7th verses of the 4th chapter of *Philippians*; never experiencing either ease of Mind, as to events, giving up to Divine conduct, as to concern for sinful failures, but when carried forth heavenly in Prayer for either.

I must subjoyn hereto an experienced circumstance, That according to the greatness of my fear as to any event, leading me the more frequently to Heaven by Prayer, and the less to confidence in outward means, the more unexpectedly eminent the return has been, discovering the excellency of the *Psalmist's* method, *What time we are afraid, we will trust in the Lord*; with the use of that Blessed means of serious Prayer, I have oft experienced, that Trust to an outward instrument for the bringing about any design, with a resting therein without frequent and fervent Prayers for the same end, has made the mean that was successful in the hands of others, or that is in its self tending naturally to a successful event, of none effect to me.

A Fifth Experience, was in the Lord's affording me heavenliness of frame, and the intercession of his Divine Spirit for an event in Prayer, when all hopes from any thing else had been remov'd, and no ground of hope left but what was drawn from this frame of Soul in Prayer, and the full quiet of mind concerning the event, brought forth by the same Divine Hand: I could set down numerous instances of the imminency of Death to Friends and Acquaintances, where nothing of probable hope was left, but what was drawn from this experience of the Spirit of God interceding with me, by carrying me out to ask in a manner far above my self, for their Recovery; and then against all probable expectation, the recovery has followed: Yea, at this very time, I can instance, a Child, who for some time was laid out as Dead, but in my humble hope, Alive; and that purely from the sensible power given me to ask its life of the Lord, *Who knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God?* as the Spirit of Man alone knows the secret Thoughts and Will of Man; and if the Spirit of God know the Mind of God, and his design of bestowing an event unknown to our selves, it is not so strange that unexpectedly and suddenly, in the use of that blessed Duty of Prayer, Christ's Spirit should breathe upon us strength to ask, what we designed not, but what he knew would be, through that method discovering the reality of a Divine Spirit, who is to help our Infirmities,

who neither know what to ask, nor how to ask of our selves, only by keeping in the Obedience of God's Will to Prayer, and thereby lay our selves in God's road to receive Divine Direction, both to ask what we did not premeditate, and in a manner above our own natural corrupted capacity. If the Spirit of God know the Will of God against an event, no wonder he draws his Divine influence from the Soul in Petitioning to obtain it, and no other warmth in Prayer appears than what is the product of self, and the great desire of obtaining it, far differing from that seriousness that is the effect of a Divine Spirit, the right observation whereof greatly helps the Christian to distinguish the one and the other.

I know that great care is here to be taken, not to entertain hopes of obtaining every Petition, that God has not absolutely promised; or by Petitioning without Resignation to his Will; but from experience of God's condescending way of training up Babes in Christianity, I hope I may say, that the Spirit of God never intercedes with us in Prayer to God for any thing that is not to be obtain'd, or without Resignation to his Blessed Will; and any mistake herein must flow from either of these two Reasons: First, From an ignorance when Christ's Spirit does intercede with us in Prayer: A natural tender affectionate Constitution; and an ardent desire after the thing pray'd for, imposes a likeness thereof in some, and continu-
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al thoughtfulness of Mind ; or a sweet Tone and way of Expression brings sometimes others to a likeness of this frame ; Whereas the observing Christian, from care therein, finds this Prayer come suddenly upon him, and with full gale of Strength, far above his own, drawing himself forth with that filial Boldness, and near Familiarity and approach to God, and with that quiet of Mind concerning the matter, as if its answer was already return'd : The observ'd experience whereof helps the Soul to answer all such cautionary Objections, and discovers to its experience, That Resignation to God's Will goes along with the Heavenliness of Frame, to make up the evidence of Christ's Spirit, helping us to ask, without either of which, the evidence seems cloudy, dull, and uncertain.

Or Secondly, Mistakes may come by misapplying the return of Prayer, through too soon judging of the Prayers return'd, or by applying Prayer to somewhat else than is the real return of the Prayer ; the effect whereof has been oft so evil, that even many gracious Children of God have been led into Darkness, kept from that sense of intimacy that really they had, judging their Prayers unreturn'd, or at least bringing them under great Thoughtfulness ; though their Faith was fix'd upon God's Word, yet how to reconcile former experiences to this of a Divine Spirit's intercedings for them, and yet unreturn'd.

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My great help against such mistakes, has been an exact observation of my different Utterance, as well as my different Frames in Prayer, and to set down the very Word express'd therein. If the Spirit of God give and help the Utterance of Ministers, as well as Spiritualize their Mind in Preaching, that being recommended by *Paul* as a fit Petition upon his account, and experienced as Truth by the worthiest of his Ministers; Why not to give and to help Utterance in Prayer, as well as a Heavenly Frame therein? Whatever others imagine or ridicule concerning familiarity of Stile in Spiritual Prayer, I can truly say, That when my Frame of Soul has been thus suddenly chang'd from Lifelessness to great Spirituality, I have then been in a maze to experience an unusual freeness of expression, wondring at the Words themselves express'd, and the nearness to God that I have thought my Soul approached to: And upon some patient waiting before judging the return of the Prayer, and comparing the parts and circumstances of the event to the words I was enabled to utter, and had afterwards set down, I found so much correspondency as is between a Seal and its Impression. I know those far exceeding my self in Grace and Experience with God, losing the sight of the return from God, by misapplying the return not to the Words utter'd in Prayer, but to what they so mightily desired. I remember an instance in my self, concerning a Servant's parting from me, and
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Petitioning Heaven for his conduct to the use of means for another, I found comfortable Divine Strength in Prayer; and in some hours after happening in the company of one, who formerly had recommended a Servant in most things acceptable, he inform'd me of another, with a Character far exceeding the first; to which Providence I immediately implying Prayer, express'd it at its return, but afterward found disappointment as to them, and difficulty in finding any other seemingly evidence of Prayer without Divine Strength put up, and unaccepted by God; but soon after, by some special passages of Providence, this Servant begg'd leave to stay, tho' they had confidently despis'd my place, and given warning to provide another in their room, which prov'd better than changing at that time, tho' a good one had fallen in my way, which was a return exactly suiting the Utterance in Prayer, confirm'd by the comparison of the latter Event to the Utterance set down.

As this was a plain instance of too hastily judging the return of Prayer, taking one Providential passage for return, begun only by it, and carried on by other passages adjoyn'd thereto; so I shall lay before you another instance of misapplying the return to the thing desired, and not to the Utterance in the Prayer Spiritually perform'd, and that by as eminent a Saint as ever liv'd on Earth, tho' now gone off the stage of time, without the sight of its

return, yet died in the Faith of my seeing its return, but still his Thoughts was upon what he so mightily prest for, in his own desire.

Providentially happening to design a matter of great concern, and imparting the design, with some passages of Providence exciting me first thereto, to this Saint then on Earth; he desired some time to think upon the matter ere he return'd his Advice, which I found was on purpose to lay the whole affair before the Throne of Grace, by repeated Addresses thereto; After which he advis'd my undertaking the design from his sense of God's laying it in my way by special conduct of Providence, and from his sense of his Petition accepted, for Divine Assistance in it, and marvellous Effects from it, from which I engag'd in the endeavour, but all attempts prov'd unsuccessful: In the interim of which endeavour, my Thoughts in Prayer never fixt to any one Petition concerning it, besides Divine conduct in the use of means, and Resignation to his Divine Will; this endeavour between hopes from this Prayer accepted, and discouragement from the unsuccessfulness of attempt, continued for many months, yet still easie, and with amazing Resignation to God's Will, till at last such a circumstance fell out as did unalterably obstruct the matter, and the return that he applied his Prayer unto; notwithstanding of which, amongst his last words to me on Earth, long after this disappointment, he utter'd this Sentence with great exercise of Faith,

Faith, That I should meet with a full discovery of God's design therein, and that in answer to his Prayer. Prayer accepted, and the intimation thereof given, will never want its return, clearly verified from comparing his Letters and Words to the Events that have attended my life since; tho' the disappointment seemed an evidence of his Prayers lost, yet really has led into such things as plainly appear his Prayer's return, his mistake appearing to be fixing his Spirituality in Prayer, with his other evidences of its acceptation, to what he so much desir'd, to wit, the success of an outward endeavour, whereas if his Utterance had been recorded, reflected upon, and compared with Events, that even I begun to find from God in my self, and did discover to him, the mistake might have been prevented.

In one of his Letters he expresses himself thus: It is becoming me with much humble sobriety to speak as to any impression on my Spirit, with respect to your business, though often I dare say I have had some special assurance from the Lord of his Gracious respect to you, so as I could not question, the evidence whereof was so full and clear, and of so great testimony; yet to you hereof in the way of Providence, and am at the furthest of persuasion, that such a breaking up of Light shall occur, as shall be matter both of Joy and farther Establishment; and if after such unusual and eminent Evidences he has given of his Respect
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and Favour to you, beyond most in this day, would it be strange or grievous, if in so great a concern, he should take a new trial of your Love and Resignation to him, by giving it entirely up to his blessed disposal? I know you have settled your Reliance on his Hand, in ordering the present matter, who has been your God, and the God of your youth hitherto.

In another Letter, his Words were: You shall see the design of the Lord in this affair, however dark it at present appear, with that evidence as shall tend to a higher establishment of you in his Way and Truth, and clear all former dark steps; the greatest experiments of Trust has been most obtain'd in the greatest extremities of his Peoples case.

In another Letter his Words were: Tho' it is not easie to write at such a distance, yet I have confidence to say, That one day rarely passes without some serious remembrance of you. My last acquaintance with you has been amongst the most sweet remarks of my being in *England*, especially as to the blessed way of God round you, therein you have been a further strength to my Faith; I know not how that matter is with you, but I hope I may adventure to say, That if ever I knew converse with Heaven here, I have often had, yea, in some special way, an answer of Peace and Assurance about the Lord's Gracious Design of Grace for you, and of his further testifying the same to your Soul: I hope you are gaining
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new ground of a nearer acquaintance with the way of the Lord, by which you will find, that by the greatest tryals he takes of his followers here, he then designs the greater trial of himself and his Truth.

Now comparing the Words of this Saint, express'd, concerning the difficulty I was then under, to my own experience of Divine Providence round me, and to the Workings of Christ's Spirit in me, since that time; I cannot but confirm his Sense and Faith of Prayer accepted, and witness its return to my self.

By the very words of his Letters, the current of his Petitions, and seeming Assurance, run upon God's witnessing his special favour to me in the way of Providence, and that such breaking up of Light should occur as might establish my Faith in God, which blessed be his Name, has been the real effect of God's disappointing my desire and endeavour after this outward thing; yea, has been a mean in God's hand to discover his special Love to my self, in affording me a better Mercy in its room, and establishing me thereby in a Trust to God as to all things else.

Besides, since these outward attempts, since those Letters receiv'd, such marvellous occurrences of Providence I have enjoyed, with such inward sensible workings of a Divine Spirit, informing and comforting my Soul, and making progress in that rich Grace of Faith, and actual reliance upon God in all things, both as
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to Soul and Body, for conduct in the use of means, and events following, which makes out his Prayer accepted, and that his assurance was firmly founded, his failure being the misapplying the Prayer thus sweetly put up, to a return of what he desired, and not to the return exactly answering the Utterance of his Soul when Christ's Spirit breath'd upon his Petitions to God, concerning the Lord's Gracious design, and testimony thereof to my Soul, I have had wonderful establishment, no more amazing; and assured to him in his actual strength to Petition it, than to me in its enjoyment, by way of his Prayers return'd.

It is conceivable by none but those who are strict observers of God's Ways, How freely Words fly out of the Mouth of a Soul under a Heavenly ravishing in Prayer; How familiarly they are express'd, and with what quiet of Mind as to the return, that if the Soul out of this frame would desire and do all that his own strength could afford, yet he shall not attain that height of free utterance, so Heavenly a Style, or so familiar and near an approach to God in Prayer, as sometimes suddenly in the twinkling of an Eye he shall be brought to, and that by the blowings afresh of Christ's Divine Influences.

I have my self, while under no other power than that of Education, stood in a maze to hear Ministers express Communion with God in Duties, the Influences of Christ's Spirit, and
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the like, imagining these as words chosen to set off Religion, and to make it the more amiable to Souls, till experience discover'd the reality thereof; and since the discovery thereof to my self, I have often with great concern of Soul, heard Christ's Spirit mockt at, Emanations and Influences from him so ridiculed, that I could not but exercise Compassion, comparing their Words to my own Thoughts while under the same circumstance of ignorance of Experimental Religion, and the inward power of Christianity; no less instruction being capable of illuminating such dark Minds, than what is an emanation and influence of that Spirit so reviv'd and set at nought in their Thoughts; such a one, and the Creature setting Christ in his Divine Nature at nought, I place in the same Categorical line.

To this Fifth Experience, I subjoin the following instance of an Undertaking, where the Eyes, Hands, and Wishes of many were against me, and no probable hope of success in a rational way, but what I had from the marvellous frame of Soul, and near access to God, concerning it, and like a Miracle, the use of means obtain'd, and the desired end was brought forth.

Here I subjoin the Experience of humble Awe and Fear, always attending the clearest Heavenly frame and most satisfied quiet of Mind I ever had concerning any one thing; confidence looking to me too much ominous

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of somewhat of Satan, and commonly proves a mean of security, and of less diligence in petitioning Heaven, and depending upon God, than when the Soul has an humble Awe, going along with its experience of God's approach to its Soul.

A Sixth Experience of God's Spirit carrying forth the Soul to Petition, according to what God was to bestow, was not only by changing of the Souls frame concerning any one Event, but even by changing the verbal Petitions in the change of circumstances in the same thing : As for instance ; At the first discovery of my inward change, my words in Prayer for any undertaking would run upon its success, and hardly upon the use of means, to which the condescension of my Heavenly Father complied by numerous and continual returns of success, tho' my endeavours at my first acquaintance with, and observation of God's Ways, were not so exact ; but upon further knowledge of his ways, and greater progress and reliance upon God for conduct to the use and right use of means, then my words were chang'd, running out in Prayer after Divine Assistance in the performance of Duty, resigning the issue to his Will ; answerable to which, a more diligent watch over my self in the use of means, and the less anxiety concerning the event, appeared ; an experience greatly helping the Soul against mistaking God or themselves, when his Ways run not in the same stream towards them, their
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advancement in strength being gradual; and many times according to the different steps of growth in Grace, so God walks in different steps round them, requiring a constant observation of his ways, admiring their variety, and bringing forth suitable improvement of knowledge of God, love to him, and dependance upon him: How infinite therefore is the Wisdom of our Blessed God, who knows the various Constitutions, and the things their Thoughts are most fixt to, that his breathing Divine Influence thereupon may be his readier mean to bring them to a serious discovery of God and their selves thereby!

How infinite is the Wisdom, Love and Tenderness of our blessed Husband-man, in the gradual growth of all the young tender Branches in his Vineyard, and in training up his Babes in the first knowledge of him, feeding the one with Milk, and the other with Meat, knowing well what each stand in need of, and can bear, either of his Smiles, or correcting Stripes, ordering each by degrees to the perfecting of Grace in the Soul, and making it mete for Eternal Glory!

The Experience whereof helps the Soul to answer the Objection of some serious Christians, but not exact Observers, who will reply upon imparting a particular method of God with a Soul by way of caution; You must be careful not to depend upon that particular way God acts with you in, lest Satan make it a tempta-

tion to unbelief and distrust of God, and your selves, when he shall please to walk in another road with your Soul; but general and strict Observers find God's Ways to be thus: That according to the infancy or manhood of the Soul in Christianity, or according to the different steps of advancing the Soul towards this Manhood, so God's Ways to be various; and according to his different ends, so his courses leading thereto usually to be different; marvelous argument indeed of infinite Wisdom, Love and Compassion in our great God! instruction enough to make us stand off from prescribing methods according to our Inclinations or Expectations, but instruction to keep our selves close in the observation of his Ways, in continual Prayer for a sight of his design, and the obtaining the establishment of Faith, tho' the method of God be never so various with us.

Hereto relates my Experience of God with my own Soul, that according to the beginnings and progress of my Faith of Reliance, so God's Method has varied; for while in the beginning of this Trust to God, I think I may say, That never a Prayer Spiritually perform'd, wanted its return immediately, and that exactly suitable to my words in Prayer; but upon further strength of this Grace of Reliance upon God, I have found the return of my Prayer longer defer'd; yea, sometimes to the last pinch of extremity, but still answerable to the frame of
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Soul and Words utter'd in Prayer, when this frame and utterance were above my own strength thorough Divine Influence; argument enough of Divine Wisdom adapting his various Ways to the various Circumstances of his Childrens weakness and strength; of Divine Love, establishing their Trust to himself, and trying their Reliance upon him, as a comfortable evidence of that strength of Grace, and thereby to lead them to the Sacrifice of continual Praise, Admiration and Love to him.

How different was Christ's carriage to the Leper, from his acting with the Woman of *Canaan*, whose Faith far exceeded the other? The Leper, much weaker in Faith, had the return of his Prayer immediately; but she, much stronger in Faith, has the return greatly defer'd, with the intermixture of many trying passages of Christ, with his own silence to her own Petition, and with his calling her *a Dog*, as if she were unworthy to be taken notice of, much less to receive of his Children's food, Mercies in answer to Prayer: The Lord knew her strength, and adapted his way of tryal thereto, which issued in Honour to him, and evidence to her self of the greatness of her Faith.

When Christ saw *Peter's* Faith as a Rock to build his Church upon, he then tells him of the Sufferings to attend him, and all that would follow after Christ, his Faith being gradually brought up to such a strength, enabled him to bear this report, which perhaps in the begin-

ning might have discouraged him to follow Christ or his Rules ; when therefore we are as *Moses*, we may be kept six days on the Mount before the answer of Prayer comes, *Gen. c. 24.* Let us therefore admire God's Wisdom and Love, in first planting or further carrying on Grace in the Soul : Let us be instructed, not to limit God to any one way in converting or further perfecting a gracious Soul ; but let us keep in the use of all God's means, with the observation of his various ways of Providence and Spirit, established upon his Divine Word, and experience in our Souls, that so we may be confirm'd in the depth, the length, and height of the Love of God, not only by a Faith wrought and kept in the Soul, but by an evident sense thereof, experimentally felt, not yielding to that lazy excuse of the danger of fathoming him ; tho' we cannot find God out to Perfection, yet we may comprehend much more of his ways than we do, to keep us in continual admiration and praise of his Love, making our life the nearer to resemble the work of Saints above, not suffering his Ways to lie still in the depth without Record thereof, or Reflection thereupon ; a method which might greatly prevent the many Fears that many gracious Souls meet with in their way, and by which they dishonour God before the Wicked, that by knowing their own Wants, and God's Method of supplying them, might be remedy'd.

A Sixth Experience of the Spirit of God's breathing upon the Soul in Prayer, and of its correspondency to the certain return thereof, was, That according to my Morning's frame in giving up my self, so has my frame continued thorough the day, but most remarkably thus on a Sabbath-Day, wherein I have found that my frame in hearing a Sermon has greatly answer'd to the frame of my Morning's private Address to Heaven, with that exactness, that I could never observe or set it upon record without great amazement: Herein mistake me not, as if I pass'd my day without any other Address, resting upon the comfortable experience of good frame in my Morning's Prayer; but upon all occurrences throughout the day, my supplication has been repeated, my method being never to attempt any Service, Civil or Spiritual, without Address to God for conduct therein; and when opportunity of set Prayer is deny'd, the same Spirituality in Ejaculation, and that correspondent to return, is experienc'd, confirming the truth of God's acceptance of the Spirit's helping the Soul to groans not to be utter'd, when the Soul in Meditation is under such a Heavenly Thoughtfulness to God as is impossible for it to utter.

I could set down numerous instances of God's acceptance of Prayer put up before entring into Company, with freedom from Quarrel or Disquiet; and when Disquiet of any kind has accompanied me, I have found it at such a time

when my Soul has been out of frame, or my Addresses to God before my entring the Society has been neglected: Who would not therefore advise me to rest upon God, and to Petition him for all things, and to have all things conveyed to me, with a sight of his special Providence in it, and as a return to Prayer for it, that when my passage through this Wilderness is at end, I may not enter unto an unknown God, who has been a Father by his special conduct of Providence, a Husbandman by the workings of his Divine Spirit; my alone Friend to whom I have put up all my Requests, and from whom I have receiv'd all the supplies of wants, and that in a way of Communion with him; neither to an unknown work, but that of which I have had some foretaste, in the use of Observation, Prayer solemn and ejaculatory, and Meditation, admiring of God manifested, and praising his Name for the experience'd discovery of himself.

A Seventh Experience of Christ's Spirit exciting to Prayer, and interceding with us in Prayer, with the certain correspondency thereof, by a return of that Prayer thus perform'd to God, has been by putting words in my Mouth, as well as Spirituality in the frame of my Mind, and that suddenly, unpremeditated, yea sometimes contrary to matter and words design'd. To clear this Experience, I will give you amongst many instances, the following one concerning a Friend's Distraction in a Fever, for whom

whom my design was to Petition God for his recovery, but was carried out in Prayer, and that powerfully too, altogether for the return of their Reason, without ever being able to ask one Petition for the abatement and removal of their Fever; upon inquiry I found their Distraction gone off, but the Fever remaining the same, the return of their Reason exactly answering the time of the Supplication for it.

Another instance of this Experience, was, Concerning another Friend, for whose Health I had design'd to Petition God, but found my Words in my Address to God, strongly diverted from Petition to Praise, blessing his Name for what he had done, and that without any foreknowledge of amendment, or probable reason to expect it, but what I had from this powerful, sudden, and undesign'd utterance in Prayer. Another instance of the same kind I very lately had concerning a Friend's beloved and only Child, for whom I found in my self great and amazing freedom of Utterance, and that by way of Praise, tho' my design was to Petition God concerning it, having all humane probability to expect its Death: After the Experience of this Utterance in Prayer, I was kept in the dark till at least ten days, and then had the account of its recovery, yea, of its great amendment answerable to the time of the Utterance of Praising, being strictly curious in the observation of the circumstance of time, that none of these marvellous Experiences might afford the
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least doubting in their enjoyment, but obtain a clear reception thereof, and produce the greater establishment therein in the Soul.

Another instance of the Seventh Experience, was, Concerning some with whom I have had to do in matters of concern, but at a distance from me, and without any other opportunity of hearing the proceedings or success of endeavours than by Letter; I have found, that tho' I have design'd before the coming in of the Post, to supplicate for a good account; yet have not been able to say any thing at all concerning the matter, answerable to which no Letter has come, or other Petitions and Words concerning the matter has been Spiritually darted up to Heaven, than was design'd, correspondent to which, the account receiv'd has exactly answer'd the Petitions, and Utterance actually put forth, and not to them only design'd to be express'd in Prayer.

A Ninth Experience of certainty of access to God, and of his Spirit's breathing power on the Soul to ask what he knew was to be return'd, has been concerning a design of three different endeavours at one time, and Prayer for guidance, a mean made use of; I have found all shadow of Spiritual enlargement in Prayer concerning it, strongly withheld, and so indeed has the least degree of successful endeavour; but for the second, enlargement only once, suitable to which successful endeavour in one circumstance thereof, and at that very time

time did occur; and for the third, such Heavenliness of frame in Petitioning not only once, but all along continued upon the Soul, and so successful endeavour without one cloud, prov'd the issue: Plainer expression I cannot well use, and instances I must forbear, lest it occasion the discovery of my self.

A Tenth Experience of the Lord's exciting and preparing to ask what he was in his good pleasure to return, was, That of his exciting and powerfully strengthening of my Soul for a continued time to Pray for self-abasement, when at the same time no outward Temptation has been my motive thereto, though soon after has appeared some outward advancement, and correspondent to the Divine Wisdom and loving care of Christ's Spirit, enabling me to ask the exercise of Humility, Self-loathing has always accompanied such outward smiles; yea, from observation of this Experience, I have imagin'd a smiling Providence eminent, from the frequency of this suit to the Lord undesign'd, but greatly assisted to Petition it.

I have often experienced, That when my Soul has not been thus carried out to Petition lowness of Mind, either before or in the enjoyment of outward advancement, that either security therein has fallen out afterward, imbittering my Thoughts, or some circumstances in the thing enjoy'd that has imbittered its sweetness, or remov'd its satisfaction, nothing being more satisfactory to a Christian Soul, as the reception

ception of an outward favour by special steps of Providence; argument of Divine favour, accompanied with such strength of a Divine Spirit, as enables the Soul to improve it, with the exercise of Love, and Reliance upon the Bestower, and to keep the Souls satisfaction therein in its true Bounds, more upon the discovery of God's Love thereby, than upon the thing it self enjoyed.

As the Experiences already laid before you relate to outward Enjoyments, so now I shall give you some Experiences respecting Spiritual Enjoyments, answerable to Christ's Spirit breathing influencing-strength to Petition them.

A First Experience thereof, was, When Spiritually carried out to ask for Humility, previous to any Spiritual Improvement, as well as before any Temporal Enjoyment; and when security, accompanied with the intermission of the means of Grace, has followed any inward advancement, then has a cloudying of what was an inward comforting evidence to the Soul, issued; but when the Soul has been carried forth to ask it before hand, or in the time, by way of return thereto, the Soul's posture has been in the exercise of self-debasement, and exultation of, and dependance upon Christ's Spirit for producing such a marvellous change in the Soul, without the least exalting thought of self.

I remember that one day in Conversation with that Holy Saint mentioned before, I express'd my self concern'd to know the reality of my Grace ; to which he humbly reply'd, I have not had the least Cloud as to my interest in Heaven, but should rejoyce to experience that measure of confirming passages of God's special love, as I know you have enjoy'd, the effect whereof I found some quiet of Mind ; but by the wise over-ruling hand of God, was follow'd with such cloudy darkness of Mind, lest Satan had excited self-exultation or sinful security, till in the following Evening-Prayer, God carrying me forth to bless his Name for the evidences of his Love, and to Petition Humillity in their enjoyment, the darkness disappear'd, and his discourse was bore home, with the alone effect of quiet of Mind, Love to, and Reliance upon God, and that with humble Thoughts of self.

Secondly, I have found, that previous to any victory over some particular Sins, I have been help'd wonderfully to plead with God on this very account, in a most near and sensible approach to him, for *Conquest over Sin*, that Scripture being at the time often and comfortable in my Thoughts, *Nay more than Conquerors through him that loved us* ; answerable to which Temptations to these, has occur'd Sins, but victory of them has been my Mercy, both as a return to the Prayer Christ's Spirit helpt me to ask, and as an evidence of such, a change
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in my Soul, as bespoke my interest in Christ, by the evident supplies of his strength, enabling me to be victor of those Sins that formerly I gave way to.

Thirdly, When God has been to afford me the evidence of great supply of strength, to suppress wandering Thoughts in Duties suddenly and powerfully for some time; ardent desire and great spirituality in Petitioning God has seiz'd me; answerable to which, marvellous freedom from wandering Thoughts has occur'd, and that in all the Duties I have been exercised in.

A remarkable instance of this Experience, was, When at a certain time my Petitions run out for strength to overcome wandering in Duty, with full assistance of God's Spirit to supplicate, and by a passage of Providence establishing my comfort, though wandrings, prevail'd, and a mean of helping forward my victory therein.

The passage of Providence was thus; Being one Sabbath-morning hinder'd from my ordinary place of Hearing, and having an opportunity of hearing Sermon in the afternoon, I found my desire with a constraining force towards another place and Minister, which was so strong, without any rational Motives thereto, that I would not be hinder'd, though several difficulties occur'd in my way; in the hearing of which Sermon, my disposition was so spiritual, that my Thoughts had full flight thither,

ther, and I in the exercise of low esteem of the Earth, with all its Allurements ; but which was the Circumstance most remarkable, is a Question a Minister was desir'd to answer to, What should be done to help wandring thoughts in Duties? Which was the very thing my mind was hurried withal then, the thing Christ's Spirit was helping me to petition strength against, and to which he was giving return with sensible Supplies ; and with this passage of Providence quieting my mind, and as a help to forward my endeavour and victory over it ; his word was, That it is a Complaint common to all Believers ; so long as there is a sense and concern for it, the Christian is not overcome by it ; go therefore on, not only striving against it, but begging the Lord's aid to vanquish it.

Fourthly, Previous to a sensible change in my self as to watchfulness in Conversation against reproaching of others suddenly and undesignedly ; and for some continued time my Soul was carri'd powerfully to pray for strength to resist the temptations of reproaching others, either through the natural tendency thereto, the common example of others, or out of the tempting-design of self-applause, in the disparagement of others ; and answerable hereto marvellous strength of Christ's Spirit was afforded me, with special Providences discovering this spiritual strength, accompanied with the bearing home upon my thoughts that of *St. Matthew, chap. 7. ver. 12. All things whatsoever you would*

would that men should do unto you, do you even so with them ; That then I could not but observe my self, against my own corrupted inclination, and others example, preserv'd from this too natural and common Vice even of lazy and professing Christians, who by the actual remembrance of this very passage, might be an excellent means to preserve them from the malignant infection of reproaching others.

Fifthly, I experienc'd a wonderful strength to pray for a continued sense of God's All-seeing Eye, as well in Conversation, as in the performance of Religious Duties ; suitable to which, not only awful thoughts of his Majesty approach'd in Duties, preventing Distraction therein, seiz'd me, but even a powerful awe of God affected me in common and private Actions, always considering any Circumstance in the Action as might destroy God's accepting thereof ; especially as to Acts of Charity, wherein I have found such a watch over my self, as I could not have been satisfied without strict enquiry, Whether unwillingness was not in the action ? Whether some desire of applause, or only pity and natural tenderness were not the Motives of this charitable action ? and nothing then has been more pleasing, than to find, that a willingness to obey God's Command, on purpose to please him, in the compassionate relief of others, a chearfulness without the least intermixture of reluctance ; a sincerity without the least desire of its being known, were the ingredients

ingredients of the Duty. I desire to witness the difficulty of thus performing actions, without great and actual influences of strength from above, the reception whereof is often obtain'd by that blessed means of solemn or ejaculatory Prayer, wherein the Spirit of Christ intercedes for his People. The same Spirit of Prayer imprest upon me a sense of God's all-seeing Eye, and that Scripture was continually in my Thoughts, *Of doing all things as unto the Lord*; the constant remembrance whereof I have found greatly advancing that Gospel-perfection of an unfeigned sincerity, both in converse with God in Holy Duties, and with one another in common Actions and Discourses.

Sixthly, I can tell you, that at another time I have been powerfully helpt to Petition for the exercise of love to God; and answerable to this, I have been helpt in Prayer, and in worldly Business, to draw forth kindlers of Love to God from all sensible circumstances of my self and others, even from the poor in the Streets, both as to their poverty and imperfections of Body, blessing the Lord, with sweet exercise of Love to him; yea, this Grace of Love to God has been excited from the observation of fulness and prosperity in some, but with great emptiness of the inward comfort of the experiencing Christian's Soul; for sensual pleasures divert their Thoughts from the observation and enjoyment of what is much more to be valued in their Nature, and lasting in their Duration.

At this very time happening to be alone in a Coach, remarking such kindlers of Love, from circumstances of others appearing in the streets, suddenly and strongly this suggestion forc'd it self upon my mind : How was it, That God did shew such special favour to me beyond others, yea, to make me differ so much from my self in former times ! with amazing Thoughts of the change upon my Soul ; and immediately that Scripture over-awed me from corrupt rational arguing, or from Satan's darkening or deviating me from right Conceptions of God and his Ways ; *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy ; I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion ;* from whence happened such quiet of Mind, as has by the blessing of God still'd my Thoughts perfectly as to that great point of Election, which is the great effect of free unmerited Mercy, and in the use of means brings the children of Mercy safely to salvation. This warmly excited my Love to God, having an evidence of my share in his Electing Mercy, by the inseparable effects of it, the work of Grace begun in me, and preparing me for the Heavenly Glory.

A Seventh Experience was, When altogether insensible of the growth of Faith, and when the Lord by a marvellous method was to establish it in my Soul, even then I observ'd for some considerable time, that I was carried out in Prayer and Meditation with zealous Affection, that the Lord would turn my Eye and trust

trust from sensible things, to a trust and reliance upon God himself as to all outward things, and as to the inward advancement of H. lineſs, as a mean tending to future Salvation; answerable to which, God has discovered himself marvellouſly in the ſteps of outward Providential Diſpenſations, and by the inward workings of his Spirit, as means of founding and eſta- bliſhing this Grace of Reliance in my Soul, which I hope ſhall be increaſing in the uſe of means, till Faith obtain its perfect end, the Fruition of God in Glory. And tho' I hope I may ſay in Humility, that my Soul is raiſed above ſenſible things, to look to things unſeen, and to ſet my Eſteem and Reliance with comfort and ſatisfaction upon them, independently upon worldly things; yet I am aſham'd for the ſmall growth of Reliance in me, and that greater improvement therein has not been the fruit of the infinitely wiſe and condeſcending method of God's goodneſs in training me to live by Faith in his Promiſes and Perfections.

Experience of God's Method in training me to the first sense of Reliance, with its further establishment and growth, and that exactly, as they are set down in Record in my Diary.

THE first Experience leading me to observe God's following Method with me, was that of carrying me forth in Prayer, to petition establishment of Faith in my Soul; which begun most remarkably after a Fit of Sickness, and has continued to be upon my Mind in all my Suits greater or lesser since that, and I hope will continue to the end of my Militant Warfare.

A second Experience leading me to Reliance upon God, was by removing all dependance from these outward fabulous Passages, reckoned as ominous of such and such certain Events, which undoubtedly were at first the effect of ignorance of the true God amongst the Heathen World, who notwithstanding the discoveries of God in his Nature and Providence by visible things, the Effects of his Power; yet natural things keep first in their view, and had the prehemineny of God in their minds and hearts. And though we enjoy the discovery of God in his Word and Providence so plainly, yet how do we retain the example in reducing those things to Natural Causes, that are to be appli'd to a Divine Agency, the true reason

reason Chance is so much in our ears, and general Reliance upon God is so little powerful in many professing Christians in our day.

To establish this Experience, God made use of the following three Means, gradually each after other.

The first was concerning one dangerously ill, whose Sickneſs, in its Nature, ſeem'd mortal, in the thoughts of Physicians, and other Aſſiſtants; and was accompanied with ſuch paſſages of Dreams, and other things, that in the old time, (and too much now in our time) were reputed certain Preſages of Death. In the interim, I thought with my ſelf, that if a Recovery ſhould happen, nothing could be in thoſe things fit to be depended upon, and therefore ſhould no more regard them. And one day going thence in a Coach alone, I found my ſelf marvellouſly ſerious in my thoughts concerning it, and aſtoniſhing ſtrength to aſk this Perſon's Recovery, and that God would make it a means to help forward for getting off ſuch things, and the placing a truſt on God in their room. Anſwerable to my Prayers, an unexpected Recovery appear'd, changing my thoughts from relying upon ſuch things, to a dependance upon God: But alas! it is ſo inherent in our corrupted Natures to look to, and to exalt Self and natural things more than God or ſpiritual things, that there was a further need of God's powerful influence.

A second Means in God's hand to destroy observation of, and dependance upon such *Omens*, was the breaking some Measures observ'd in my common Undertakings, and rested upon as presaging of such Events to it, answerableness of the numerousness of Undertakings in the latter part of a week, to those that fell out in the fore-part thereof, which was in observation unsuitable to example; and though the observation of other *Omens* be suitable to the too-much example of others yet altogether unwarranted by Divine Scripture, yea, threaten'd to be accompanied with evil, *Jonah 2. v. 8. They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercy. Psal. 31. 6. I have hated them that regard lying vanities, but I trust in the Lord.* How agreeable is it to the Infinite Wisdom and Mercy of God, to bring me from trusting any thing, as a blessed means of reliance upon God alone! and therefore I have observ'd, that according as the first has been gradually cutting off, so the gradual growth of dependance upon God in all things, has sensibly sprung up; and though the effect of this Divine Passage was a greater distrust of those vain things, yet God was not pleas'd to rest here, but to take

A third Means of advancing this blessed Grace of Reliance, and laying low this sinful esteem of Natural Causes, was a severe Fit of Sickness, accompanied from the first apprehension of it, to its perfect removal, with such
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providential Steps as bespoke plainly a Divine Power without Means, drawing my Soul irresistibly to the observation of, and dependance upon him, at least with the use of Means.

One Step whereof was, A fixt apprehension of a Fit of Sickness imminent, and that as a just punishment for my trust to *Omens* of natural Events, which God by his merciful Condescension turn'd about as a spiritual Remedy to that reigning Illness then too much in my Soul.

A Second Step was, An unexpressible nearness to God in fellowship with him, ravishing my Soul at the time with that comfortable view, as it were, of Heaven, and despising things below, that I could not have bore up if it had continued long, and that immediately before the first assault of my Illness.

A Third was, The sensible withdrawing of this Frame for some days, till near the danger of being delirious, and the use of such Means as formerly had never been us'd towards me, on purpose for its prevention.

A Fourth was, That my Soul was in a spiritual and heavenly Frame, and carri'd forth with that amazing strength to pray for ease to my head, and preservation from deliriousness, with such an immediate return, that I think I may say my head was easy, and my judgment clear in a moment after this Address; and though without any rest for some days, yet I was as free in my head as ever to my own apprehen-

sion : this amaz'd me at the time, and gave occasion to lay aside the Clyster and Blisters which my worthy Physicians had prescrib'd, telling my Nurse, a godly woman, *That the Lord had done it.*

A Fifth Step of Divine Agency was, The powerful carrying forth of my Soul in Prayer after recovery, upon these two Petitions which have continued to be expressed in all my Addresses to Heaven ever since that time, and have marvellously continued to be return'd since then. The Petitions were, That the Lord would advance a work of Faith, and that perfectly in my Soul; and that I might discover Immediateness of him in Providences, and the inward working of his Spirit : which were Petitions unpremeditated, and undesign'd. And as it was Divine strength exciting and enabling me to petition, so by influences of the same strength he has enabled me to hold on petitioning, and by sensible Providences and Operations of his Spirit, he has eminently discover'd his Divine Hand, and my being under his special Conduct.

A sixth Step was, A more sensible Advancement from trusting things commonly receiv'd ominous of future Events, to an intire reliance upon himself. The searching into Natural Causes, with excluding a Divine Hand, is the occasion of our imagining our selves more knowing than we are, and of exalting Nature with its effects, in the room of the Creator, and his Divine Providence.

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A second Experience of God's Method of establishing and making to grow in this Grace of Reliance was, By removing Reliance upon spiritual Means made use of by others on my account, especially when it lessen'd my own diligence with God for the same thing. It is natural for us to overvalue Nature, and natural things, and undervalue God and spiritual things; the confirmation whereof I had in my self by an over-valuing of one who, I may say, was a great helper of my Faith, and in the making up of whose Crown I shall, I hope, be a Member in that day of Glory, to whom I would always run with any of my difficulties to acquaint him therewith, sometimes before my acquainting God therewith in Prayer, and would endeavour to obtain his Interest by his Addresses to Heaven concerning it, which when undertaken by him would faithfully be perform'd, and sympathizingly too, from personal Affections; and God's inclining me from my youth to observe him, which was a Duty greatly assistant and comfortable. By reason of all which, I have had less Anxiety concerning the matter, and probable hopes from his interest with God to obtain it, and have used less diligence my self with God upon my own account; which derogated from God, upon whom my entire Reliance should have been plac'd, and not to have given him some degrees of trust, that were the alone Prerogative of God. The Method of God to overcome this in my Soul was,

First,

First, By the discovery of this holy Soul's misapplying Prayer to what he desir'd, and not to his utterance in Prayer, and that in an Affair on my account, of which you have already heard.

Secondly, By removing him from me at that time when God made him so blessed a help to my Faith, I giving him more of affection and trust, than what was his due as God's Instrument. And if these two had sufficiently overcome this Failure, perhaps God had proceeded no farther; but having the opportunity of Letters to acquaint him with matters of difficulty, and to press his interest for me, I found this trust to him, and less diligence of my self hold on, and so God in his wise condescending care and love

Thirdly, Removed him from the world, and that unexpectedly and surprizingly; and whatever was the end of God concerning himself or others, this was plainly discover'd to my self by after-passages of God's outward Providence and inward Spirit attending my life, That my regard was too high to this Instrument, and his prevalency with God, and dishonourable to God; therefore to rectify my Error, the Lord was pleas'd by his death at the same time to recall me from trusting in Creatures, but only to rely upon himself in the use of his ordinary means prescrib'd in his Word. This may be Caution to all Hearers to give the Ministers their due place, neither overvaluing some,
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nor undervaluing others, but valuing and admiring God's Free-grace the more, that by any means is made effectual to establish and increase Grace in the Soul.

The departure of this blessed Saint, was made a powerful Means of Conviction of my Failure, and that as a leading-step towards higher Trust to God, with that sweet Fellowship with him, that at the time, and often since, to obtain such an enjoyment, I could willingly accept of such another stroke, though it was very afflicting to my Soul to be deprived of my alone spiritual Friend on earth, and the greatest helper of my Soul ; but I am now instructed to say of God, my chosen happiness, *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee.*

A Third Experience of God's Method of removing Reliance upon any thing, to establish and advance dependance upon himself, was, By turning Natural Causes out of their course of producing their natural and former experienced Effects, to the Production and Events seemingly unnatural, and formerly unexperienc'd. Thus eminently it has fallen out, when the intermixture of serious and heavenly Prayer has been neglected, from the certain expectation of a desired effect, as the natural issue of such a Cause made use of, and a Mean formerly experienced. • Many Instances of this Experience
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I could produce, when in undertaking a Matter of great Concern, by reason of using as a Means to effectuate the Matter naturally tending thereto, and often tried, as productive of it ; I have had less Solitude, and made seldom approach to God by Prayer for Conduct in the use of Means, and for a Divine Blessing upon the Issue ; and instead of the natural and common effect, unsuccessfulness has follow'd endeavours ; yet when God has chang'd this laziness, and secure frame of Soul, to a more spiritual addressing God by Prayer, in conjunction with Means, that then the next Attempt to use the same Means, has been accompanied with such success as was suitable to its natural and experienc'd tendency. This clearly convinces of the uncertainty of the most probable Events in the use of the most promising Means, without a Divine Blessing accompanying ; and therefore instructing the necessity and advantage of address to God, in conjunction with other Means to make our endeavours successful. An Experience fixing and advancing within my self resolution of addressing God concerning all things, and a dependance upon him for the issue of all things, whatever seeming certainty appear without this in the use of Means ; and though many great Events have been brought forth in the use of Natural Means, without so much perhaps as once petitioning Heaven, as many successful undertakings of the wicked do witness ; yet this is no opposition to the present
Expe-

Experience: The wicked enjoying all things in a common Line of Providence; the Children of God in a Line of special Conduct, Love and Favour, by special passages of Providence, and in a way of return to Prayers. This Experience reproves trusting to any Natural Agent, but in subordination to a Divine Power, which is a Proposition that in Conversation we find seldom opposed, though little verified in the Actions of some, who, with Lifted-up-eyes, and Outward seriousness, will say, *The Lord give a Blessing to Means*; when, at the same time, they never put up a serious Prayer to God afterward concerning the same matter; or who, in pinchings only of extremity, when natural things fail, or they are incapable of smothering the Convictions of Conscience, are forc'd to cry out, (*Lord have mercy upon me.*) This is also little verified in the Actions of some Professors, who looking so much to Natural Causes, or to Fortune or Fate, lessen that trust and dependance they ought to have upon a Divine Over-ruling Power in all things, and hinder themselves from addressing God for his Conduct in the right use of Means, or bringing about their desired End; and especially if they are under God's special and Divine Conduct, and enter'd into the number of his Children.

A Fourth Method of God discovering his hand in all things, and leading me to a dependance upon him for all things, was, By disappointing

pointing expectations, when founded upon seeming, sure, and probable grounds, especially if trusted to with a pleasedness and rejoicing in the expectation, but without ever supplicating the Lord's Conduct to bring it about. It is true the *Psalmist's* Advice is, *To be anxiously careful for nothing*; not by Idleness, or by using Means diligently with a trusting thereto, but by making our Addressees known to God by Prayer. When this is restrain'd, no wonder anxiety of Mind, and toil of Body meet God's Children's endeavours, yea, disappointments follow their most desired and probable expectations. I hope I may faithfully witness it as truth, that I was never help'd in a heavenly ravishing frame of Mind, to petition God concerning any one Event, with resignation to his Will, and full quiet of Mind, whatever discouragement seem'd in obtaining the matter, but a gracious return followed. Yea, the most hopeful design, without this means of supplicating God concerning it, has ever been accompani'd to me with a visible disappointment. Many Instances I could adduce, were it not that I am to be unknown. Sometimes for many months together, every day, in one Instance or another, this Experience has been brought to my observation; and if the observation of God's method in removing trust from any thing, and planting a reliance upon himself, with the visible and blessed effects brought forth thereby in my own Soul; if the reflection there-

thereupon had not establish'd my Faith, I should have often been flying out with repinings at God's disappointing my diligent use of Means, commonly leading to such Ends: But discovering God's design, yea, infinite love, in my own disappointments, and my Meditations thereupon were thus; Did the Lord strengthen me eminently after my Fit of Sicknes, and continually in most, if not all my Addresses to Heaven since that time, to ask for advance of this Reliance? And has the Lord return'd this Petition by sensible Reliance upon himself, never formerly acquainted with, and that in a mysterious conduct of outward Providence; shall I therefore bring forth this ill improvement, of not working with God, or of trusting God only in the enjoyments of smiling Favours, when difficulties sensibly have tended to the increasing my dependance upon God; or trust God only when other things are of no use, or when Means producing such Events, naturally or probably turn their course, and prove ineffectual? No, that should be no less than height of Ingratitude; and what my loving God has prevented by his Spirit's accompanying his method of special outward Providence, and therefore have great Reason to walk in a Road of Constant Dependance upon him, crying out; Oh, the height and depth of the Love of God, in first designing me such a mercy of Reliance, in bringing it about, and that in a method of outward Provi-

Providence, evidencing it sensibly to my self, as well as really working it in the Soul by his Spirit going along with his outward Providences, and in preserving this Reliance, notwithstanding the Soul's unwillingness, when Duty and Interest went hand in hand at the same time.

This very Experience is enough to answer all the ignorant Cavils of the Irreligious, and the Doubtings of some Christians, who with the *Psalmist* are perplext how to understand rightly the inequality of Divine Providence towards the prophane and the gracious Christian; the first abounding in worldly Pleasure, while the other appears under crossing afflicting Providences: The private Christian's inward observ'd experience of God's method with himself, affords knowledge of God and his Ways, and strength to resist corrupt and Satanical Suggestions, and peace and comfort even in the enjoyment of outward disappointments, when their Friends are in concern on their very account, or others in their circumstances ready to stagger as to God's favour to them; and that by reason of these things which appear to the observing Christian, the greatest tokens of Divine special Love: For the better understanding of this, I would have you consider;

First, That a Christian renewed from original Corruption to Grace, is received under a special conduct of God's Providence without, as well as his Spirit within, and that greatly
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different from the common Providence that attend the wicked of the Earth, *Psal. 4. 3. But know that the Lord has set apart him that is Godly for himself; Exod. 11. 7.* The outward Providence of God was so special towards the Children of *Israel*, *That the very Dogs were not to Bark at them*; besides, to be witness to three or four private Christians imparting God's special conduct remarkt round each one of themselves, one would think that the Narrative of each argued so much of Speciality, as if each had been the alone beloved Child of God, about whom he had spent his special loving Care; whereas those round whom is the alone conduct of common Providence, they can reach no higher than the general power of a great and merciful God, as Creator and Preserver of all Things, but not as their God and Father, or their Providences attending them as the Fruits of their peculiar Interest in him through Christ, and as Heirs of his Kingdom, enjoying the earnest thereof, in the special outward Providences and inward workings of a Divine Spirit attending their life. Great loss therefore, that Christian incurs, who tho' under the special conduct of outward Providence, yet wants the sense thereof, unless in remarkable instances of it; and that for want of a general observation of all the steps of God's Ways with himself, from his first Conversion to a full establishment in all the Graces of God's Spirit. A Christian that has been observant of God's outward and

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inward conduct, not only witnesses a speciality of Providence regarding God's own children, but he will patiently bear afflicting Dispensations, that are designed to make him sensible of his neglect of God's dealings with him, and of his neglect or careless performance of particular Duties, and may change his nature from secure, cold, and lazy, to spiritual, heavenly and zealous; and to make him more watchful and diligent in the resisting Temptations, and mortifying Corruptions, and in the exercise of every Grace that may preserve him from the power of the Tempter. A Christian under the same special conduct of God's care, but without the strict observation of it in all the steps of God's Providence, has neither the knowledge nor the strength that the observing Christian has convey'd to his Soul, as the true effects of so desirable a Duty; but is ready to droop in his Spirit when afflicted, not knowing God's design in particular, tho' relying on that blessed Word, *That all things work together for good to them that love God*; yet missing God's particular design in the present want of his Soul, the present Mercy thereby to be bestowed, he becomes in danger of Satan's tempting him to Despondency, of a Melancholly carriage in Religion, and of passing his Pilgrimage State under Clouds.

Secondly, That since God's own Children are under the special conduct of Providence, then they alone must best judge of God's Wise procedure,

cedure, and witness for God, that what the carnal World is apt to charge against God upon the account of the present Afflictions of his Children, is from Ignorance: For Afflictions are the certain Evidences of his Wisdom and Love, as a Father and a Physician, to purge them from Sin, to make them more holy and heavenly on Earth, and to make them more prepared to reign with him above. Tho' those who are only led by sense, see not Good in Afflictions, yet sincere Believers, who from constant observation, and by the help of a Divine Spirit, have improved Afflictions, they are ready to comply with God's End so soon as it appears, and earnestly pray for, and rejoyce in the hope of a blessed Issue. If Christians were serious in searching out their Sins before, or in the time of Afflictions, and how defective they are in the exercise of the Graces of the Spirit, they would be assured, not only from Divine Revelation, but from their happy Experiences of God's Mercy in all; that the peaceable Fruit of Righteousness will outweigh all their Sufferings and Sorrows.

A Fifth Method of God to advance Reliance upon himself, was, by immediate specialty of a Divine Hand in passages of Providence, in laying matters of great success in my way, and that in the following instances.

First, By bringing them about, without the operation of second causes commonly made

use of, having in many instances experienced such things laid in my way, wherein I have hardly been able to discover any thing else, besides the Hand of God bringing them forth.

Secondly, By ordering my real Enemies as instruments of Benefits to me in their Actings, though undesignedly by them.

Thirdly, By ordering such numerous successful designs with freedom from outward toil, that I enjoyed a great opportunity to observe and meditate upon the Lord's Way thus with me, and to set it upon strict record for after-reflection, and comparing it with his preceding and following methods, and the improvement thereby brought forth in my own Soul.

Fourthly, By Divine Excitement of some to be assistant in such providential matters laid in my way.

Fifthly, By ordering success to all such undertakings, accompanied with such immediateness of Providence.

A *Sixth* Method to advance Dependence upon God, and to keep means (too much relied on) in the due place, was by suffering by one step of Providence or other, Friends to my outward concerns (of whose Friendship and Service I had eminent experience) to be turn'd and fixt to the interest of others, which I must confess, seem'd at first appearance dark and cloudy, and continued thus to be, till by perusal

usual of my Record, I came to know the state of my Soul I was then under, the work of God he was sensibly advancing, the particular design of God at the time, (from comparing his Ways, and the improvement brought forth thereby) and the suitableness of such a method of Providence to bring it forth, even an entire Reliance upon himself for all Events.

In which Experience I had this sweet passage to observe, That as God in his returns to Prayer, suited their speediness or greater delays to the weakness and strength of Faith, so herein did the Lord compassionately suit his Ways to the weakness of my reliance in him; for least such an Experience should overwhelm my weak Faith, the Lord immediately gave success to my endeavours, with the same ease of Mind, and freedom from toil of Body, as when under the advantage of the interest of such Friends and visible means, with that special Providence, that I have often stood in amazement, and have been ravished with the observation of what strange passages of Providence has every day fallen out to continue such successful endeavours; yea, I may say, greater then when under the opportunity of such instruments.

A Seventh Experience, was, By permitting the loss of some undertakings, that were probable to be greatly advantageous, without the least deficiency on my part as instrumental

therein : This at first seem'd afflicting, till the discovery of the unsuccessfulness of others concerned, with great disparagement of Character appeared, which then made me rejoyce in God's Divine conduct, and see great Love in the disappointment, with the feeling of inward Peace, that I had no ways contributed to the unsuccessfulness of the affair, moving me to lay all my concerns at God's footstool, leaving Events, pleasing or ungrateful, to Divine disposal, I keeping serious with God for the faithful discharge of Duty.

The Eighth Experience of God's method to suppress Reliance on any thing besides himself, was, by the Lord's Way of vindicating me from undeserv'd reproach, either by immediate clearing up of innocency and the falshood of reproach, and so cutting it off at first; or by hindering it, tho' continued, from injuring my name, by making impressions upon others, or by giving me opportunity by some failure of theirs, to Asperse them truly, to their great loss and discouragement, and so stopping of their Rage through Fear.

One eminent instance of this Experience I'll give you, concerning one, who from no other foundation that I ever could judge of, but that of Malice, greatly disparaged my Name, yea, continued therein, notwithstanding of my Dutiful imparting the thing to themselves, with a true vindication of my self, till by a marvellous passage of Divine Providence, an eminent

ment opportunity of reproaching them was laid in my way, and that by the knowledge of her failure in a great and weighty concern, capable of ruining them, and freeing my self from their further rage ; but tho' there was a struggle between revenge and forbearance to Asperse them, yet blessed be the Lord his Grace was victorious over corrupt Nature, and instead of reproaching, I only endeavoured the making of themselves sensible of their faults, trusting God, who had laid such an occasion in my way, to stop the current of their Malice, and had preserv'd me from the guilt of pursuing Revenge : That their reproaching, at least, with impression upon others, should cease ; which was clearly verified by after experience, wherein I have fully seen their incapacity of injuring me that way ; and therefore one instance I hope of the exercise of Grace in my self, and of this Experience being an excellent mean to advance Reliance upon God in all such cases.

Another special Instance of this Experience is, concerning [a] Reproach against me, with some great probability of Guilt when rehears'd by the Reproacher : I must own my not meriting the Reproach, was from the restraining Grace of God, I being at the time of the occasion of the Reproach, under no other power sensible to my self than that of Education ; but if at the time of being reproached, I am helpt in a Heavenly posture of Soul to lay it before God, and find carefulness and ambi-

ety laid aside, in correspondency to this frame, appears a Divine Providence restraining the Enemies from Reproaching, or if continued its insufficiency of injuring me, though it be greatly their design, and that with a unwearied diligence. In this instance I have two Circumstances to lay before you, greatly remarkable and marvellous, discovering the subtleness of Heavenliness in Prayer to its return; and of the Providential Method of God to train me higher in the exercise of Reliance upon himself.

One of which Circumstances is, That at the time when God was building this Faith, then a violent assault was made use of as a mean of strengthening and enlarging the degrees of Reliance, and trust in God, with Prayer for all my concerns; and that in the following method, the assault of reproaching continuing as furious as false in all its reported Circumstances, did seemingly tend not only to disparagement of Name, but to danger of Law Suits, the hindrance whereof could by no other means be procur'd, than the presence of one who had been for some considerable time out of the Kingdom, and in no likelihood of returning without great Intracaty, Pains, and Charge: But at the time when this Reproacher was at the height of their pursuit by Reproach, and design of Law against me, the inward posture of my Soul was spiritual in Prayer concerning it, and in Meditation upon it; and at that very time I had an account by
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Letter, that the Person whose presence was requisite for my Vindication, was surprisingly call'd to this place upon a Providential occasion, he knowing nothing thereof till some hours before, and altogether ignorant of my Circumstances, or of the desire I had to have him here. By this only Circumstance I had opportunity of allaying the Reproach, and of perfectly preventing any Law-Suit against me. Tho' I cannot fully stop the fury of a malicious Tongue, yet I cannot express my self concerning its continuance, without praising the infinite love of a Divine Being in it, and the great improvement by it; finding that often a cold, lazy frame of Soul, and the renewing of this reproach meet together, and that the immediate effect of the latter, is mostly a change from this lazy frame, to a spiritual heavenly posture of Soul, with the enjoyment of sweet Fellowship with God in Prayer concerning it, greatly helping me from anxiety and disquiet under it, with a design and endeavour to comply with the Blessed end of God in it.

Another Circumstance greatly remarkable in this instance, has been, That without any other mean of endeavour to defend my self by reproaching again, or the like, but purely by the laying it before the Throne of God, the repeated Reproach has either been still, or frustrated; which at first occasion'd some doubts in my Thoughts, whether I should not
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by going to this or the other, clear my self, and not presumptuously expect deliverance without Means; but finding my Vindication to themselves of no effect, and my Vindication of my self to others would occasion Aspersions upon them, I was still, and used the means of Prayer, and was careful of not giving them further occasion to Reproach, and found greatest success, and dare recommend it to the practice of others; not only from my own experience, but from the *Psalmist's*, who in *Psal. 38. v. 13.* expresses himself thus, *I as a deaf man, heard not; and as a dumb man, opened not my mouth:* No doubt but he could have us'd reasonable Arguments to prove his Innocency, but in *v. 15. He hoped in the Lord:* In like manner when I have been enabled by Prayer with great exercise of Faith therein, to lay the Case at God's foot; and trustingly to hope in him; I have found all power of the Reproach gone off. I desire therefore *what time I am afraid, to trust in the Lord;* And this very Experience has been a blessed Mean to bring forth this desire in my Soul, *Psal. 56. v. 9. When I cry to thee, in a believing heavenly posture, then my Enemies shall draw back:* When God strengthens a Soul by his Divine Spirit under Reproaches, to cry unto him; either the Reproachers will cease, or their Reproaches will be without effect, or Recoil upon themselves.

To this Experience I subjoin the following Observation, That upon hearing a Reproach, and seriously reflecting upon my self, I have often found it as a just punishment, and an immediate return to Sin of my own, either of Reproaching the same Person with the same or another sort of Reproach, or some body else, by such a kind of Reproach; and so a sense of my own fault, with a discovery of love from God therein, and a watch over my self unto Prayer, and against reproaching, by this very reflection has been brought forth, accepting the reproach, as *Shimei's* was taken, *God bad him.*

A Ninth Experience of advancing Faith was, By the great, sudden, and unexpected Supplies that have come in suitable to Wants, and to my firm dependance upon God, through former experience of his ways. I have found that though Supplies has been deferr'd for some considerable time, yea, even to the very last moment, yet they have come in so seasonably to my need, that God in his method of bestowing them, has taken trial of the strength of my dependance upon him, and so has afforded me a comfortable evidence of that Grace, and given a discovery of the immediateness of his hand in bringing them about, as well as producing thereby a trust on himself; sometimes I have found Supplies deferr'd for a long time, that if former experience of God's way of trying my Faith,
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and further establishing it thereby, had not preserv'd in me a divine strength, I should have been ready to droop; but even then such a true Reliance upon God, in the time of long delay, I have followed always with such numerous successful passages, as afforded more than if Providence had walk'd in its usual course; when therefore by such steps and supplies following a true Reliance under those delays has occurred afterward, how ungrateful had it been not to regard God in the thing, or not observ'd his ways, with the improvement of a Reliance upon him?

I have observ'd, that so soon as observation of God's way, and settlement of Faith in himself thereby, was brought forth, that then the Lord's method has varied with me both as to time and things; appearing in a time, and in a matter and way unexpected, and all on purpose to advance my dependance upon God at all times, and in all sorts of concerns.

A Tenth Experience of advancing Reliance upon God was, By his making outward, diligent, lawful, and commendable endeavours altogether unsuccessful, till he had founded it, and gradually advanced this dependance upon himself; the obtaining undertakings and success therein, having been kept in a constant stream of special Providence, so that when any undertaking thorough my own interest has been near, it either has not occurred, or most commonly proved unsuccessful; and underta-

undertakings have been never more frequently successful, than when most remote from common Methods of obtaining them, and I have been most near to God in Prayer concerning them. I think I may say, I never found my self without this encouragement of successful undertakings, but my frame of Soul has been dead, cold and lifeless, and my intermissions from heavenliness of frame visible; and I have never found my self in continued fellowship with God in Prayer and Meditation, but numerous undertakings have fallen in my way, and that with marvellous success, unless unsuccessfulness was necessary for one good end or other, plainly appearing in the Circumstances of God's providential Conduct therein, sometimes for the discovery or punishment of one failure or other in my self, all which have abundantly laid open to my view the immediateness of God's hand in all things here below, the great advantage of interest in his special Conduct, and by the help of Christ's Spirit rais'd an ardent desire of trusting God in all my designs, even when most diligent in the use of Means.

An Eleventh Experience of God's design and method to advance Faith of Reliance was, By the visible Effects of these very Experiences, establishing my eye and thoughts upon God, either in respect of strength to act Duty as pleasing to himself, or in respect of special Providence bringing all things unto my hand, that
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nothing has made the Mercy relish more with me, than that Circumstance of Specialness of a Divine Hand in bringing it about ; yea , I may say, that the most comfortable Favour on this earth has nothing of solid sweetness in it, without a discovery of Favour from Heaven therein : And that the most afflicting disappointment and disturbing evil wherein the design of God's love has appear'd in his providential order of it, has been more acceptable to my Soul than an outward Blessing, wherein special Love has not been so clearly discoverable. The Method of God's advancing Reliance, has been by sometimes delaying the answer of Prayer, and with-holding its return longer than usual, (though there has been evidence of its acceptance in Heaven) and that sometimes to the last extremity of a matter concern'd.

An eminent Instance whereof was, concerning an Affair, where acting or not acting in it, carri'd along the danger of great disgrace and disadvantage ; and determining with my self not to act, was by an irresistible passage of Providence constrain'd to move in the matter, which at first seem'd to damp my hopes that my Prayer concerning it was accepted ; but the return exactly suited my frame and desires expressed in Prayer, though its discovery was so long defer'd, even till upon the very brink of acting, and then providentially effected other ways ; a passage which at the time ravish'd me with astonishment.

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An Instance instructive not to limit God to time or desire, but to commend our case to God as our Father, intirely to depend on himself for the Event in his own method and time, with a diligent acting Duty on our part, and then the blessing will be the sweeter and more remarkable; yea, with great honour to God, by such an actual exercise of Reliance upon himself.

A Twelfth Experience of God's Method to establish my dependance upon him, has been by laying in my way outward Vexations, for the bringing of me in to a serious spiritual frame of Soul, the experience whereof seems as it were naturally to prevent murmuring at Disquiets, and to keep me often upon my knees with heavenliness of thought, and in the exercise of trust to God, who discovers in afflicting Providences great love in their effects, of changing the Soul's posture, and making them a mean of preserving dependance brought forth in the Soul.

A Thirteenth Experience of God's Method to continue and heighten dependance upon himself was, By giving great raisedness of frame of Mind, and high exercise thereof in Prayer, as a Forerunner of some Disquiet, that from this Experience, Anxiety and Despondency under it might be prevented; and I, notwithstanding thereof, kept on in Reliance upon God,
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who, in condescending Favour, gave such sweet strengthening allowance as might hold out in the ensuing Providence, and that against the rising of Sin within, and the force of Temptations without.

And here I subjoin an Instance of the inefficacy of the latter, when one day I in sweet communion with God in Prayer, and at the time of Enjoyment, under the actual sense of some Disquiet, (having observ'd in the Method of God, that a sense of Disquiet, and Fellowship with God at the same time, have met together, as a Forerunner of some Affliction that would happen ;) so soon as I was off my knees, to walk up and down in my Chamber, as soon, like Lightning, Satan threw this Suggestion upon me, That I had better be without these Enjoyments, than have the Disquiets that follow them. My Fellowship with God in Prayer, was too strong at that time to receive any impression of that kind, and, blessed be his Name, the Suggestion was so bare faced, and clearly diabolical, that I was immediately strengthened to repel it as a Trifle.

The Effects of which Experience were,

First, A further establishment in the truth of that Scripture, *All things work together for good to them that love God.*

Secondly, A continued hope in his mercy, which since that time has been greatly establish'd by the enjoyment of the *Psalmist's* words as certain truth, *The Lord delights in them that fear*
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fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy: That, methinks, all my Arguments with God are bound up in this one, of the greatness of his mercy in Christ, the observation of special favour in all smiling and frowning passages of Providence, the advancement of Reliance upon God in all things, brought forth by God's Divine Spirit, in the use of that mean of observation, has further establish'd and fix'd my hope upon his mercy in Christ, and that for other changes within, and future happiness hereafter.

A Fourteenth experience of God's Method of training me into dependance upon himself, was from the observation of God's way of freeing my Thoughts from concern under Disquiets, and carrying my concern off from the thing disquieting, to a search and desire after Enjoyment of God in Prayer put up for the disquiets, which is the alone Gift of Christ's Spirit; the Promise of Divine Scripture, and my alone comfort under disquiet. This is to me the evidence of my Petitions being accepted, and the Token of special Guidance from Heaven throughout the disquiet; In confirming the truth of which experience the Scripture is plain, charging us *to be careful for nothing, but by supplication to make our request to God*; and when by the intercession of a Divine Spirit we are enabled to make our request, the experiencing Christian can truly say, that anxiety is taken off, and
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full exercise of reliance upon God is in its room, both for conduct to the Soul throughout the disquiet, and for the removing of it in his own time and way ; if God's Method herein was more observ'd, there would be less trust on outward helps, and more reliance upon God in Prayer, join'd with the due use of means, and would by a blessing attending them, be convincing to the men of this World, who are led by sense, and disbelieve the Prerogative-Power of God's Providence in all things.

A Fifteenth experience of God's Method of advancing my reliance, has been by fixing my desire, delight and longing after spirituality of frame, with all, and every one of the most comforting outward mercies of the present Life, in the desires of the best of outward blessings, I find an unexpressible fixedness of thought upon these two things: One is, That it may be convey'd by Providences, arguing speciality of love ; another is, that this conveyance may be a means of heightning reliance upon God, and raising me to more sweet and intimate Communion with him : And I hope, I may with some humble awe say, that my Eye is so much upon God's hand in bringing about, and upon Communion with God, in the enjoyment of all things on Earth, that the more I see, and enjoy of the outward pleasures of this Life, the more they are undervalued by me, and the more I am afraid of them, by reason
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of the temptations attending them to the breaking off of Heavenliness of frame, which is the true inward comfort of the Soul of an experiencing Christian : This very Experience has made me sensible of the following things.

First, That the best of them (of which I have not wanted some taste) afford not that solid abounding sweet satisfaction, as I do really experience in Heavenliness of frame, and therefore do exercise great pity towards them who know nothing of fellowship with God in the frame of their minds, or in the performance of duties ; I don't much wonder at their prizing the comforts of this Earth, counting all things else as nothing or imaginary, never having experienced the reality of spiritual things ; and no wonder therefore they dip themselves as much as possible in these things that afford present, sensual, and vanishing comfort, rather than by a serious application of themselves to God in the use of Divine Ordinances, which while they are unregenerate, can afford no solid ravishing comfort ; they being as I was while only under the power of Education, *Nicodemus*-like, amazed at the literal meaning, how Christians could talk with God, and enjoy Communion with an invisible God, it being impossible by the greatest reach of the most ingenious fancy, to apprehend the state of the Soul with its ravishing sweetness, when in fellowship with God ; and though I have made use of these

words of Spirituality, and Heavenliness of frame, to explicate fellowship with God, my design is not thereby to set it forth with words, that may make it sensible to unexperiencing Souls, these words being understood and felt only by real Believers ; it is enough that to you of the unregenerate rank, I can seal and give testimony to the truth and reality thereof , from my certain experience ; and can lay before you the means God was pleased to make use of to bring me to the sensible enjoyment thereof : And if your longing desire to experience it, prompt you not to the use of these means , by which you may obtain it, then in the Day of Judgment you cannot but expect your accusation to run thus : *Light came into the world, but you chus'd rather to walk in darkness*, according to your carnal Conceits of Divine things, and not in the use of Sacred means, as others have done to attain a clear comfortable experimental knowledge thereof ; which you may easily do, considering the great condescending encouragement God gives to the smallest sparks of sincere desires, and serious endeavours ; he will by the Spirit of Grace assist you, and reveal the secret of his love to your Souls, and bring you into his Marvellous Light. And as the case of the prophane , and of these only under the power of Education, fills me with pity, so Lazy Christians are greatly to be threatned, who know the reality of fellowship with Heaven , but instead of keeping themselves in the comfortable and
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continual enjoyment thereof, and thereby to witness its truth, in Conversation with others, by their involving themselves in the full stream of the pleasures of this Earth, they hinder their delightful and constant enjoyment of God, and give occasion to others, to believe that ravishing comfort of fellowship with God, is merely a Notion, and make their own Lives upon the assault of afflictions, yea their Dyings too, less comfortable, and thereby disparage the Truth of the Gospel: it may afford you an awful reflection; O Lazy Christians! who by your great outward enjoyments should be more excited to maintain Communion with God, who is the fountain of felicity, and to testify that his favour is better than Life and all the fruitions of it; but you content your selves with hasty or drowsy performance of Religious Duties Morning and Evening, without the Exercise of those Graces and Affections which are the Life of them: And by a careless Conversation in the World, the impression of Divine things are soon worn out, and dye in the diversion of the Soul from God, by the free fruition of Temporal things, which are to be so temperately used, that we may enjoy God. When the World is the Idol of Mens Heads and Hearts, it De-thrones God, and deprives them of the Comforts of his Love and Presence.

Secondly, My Fifteenth experience has made me sensible, that the comfort of outward things,

is more in the expectation than in the possession; whereas spiritual comfort is much sweeter in the enjoyment, than it is for any Humane Creature possible to imagine, unless experienc'd in the Soul. My own apprehension, and account of a spiritual frame, is this; That when I am in it, my mind is clear, free of Clouds, or concern of any kind, though in the midst of trouble, unless it be lest I should not continue in a holy frame. While under the alone power of Education, I have often suggested to my self, O that I were in such a Circumstance, my state should be happy! but when by the Providence of God I had arriv'd to that Circumstance, I found no addition of comfort by it; and to speak more plainly, my great expectation was confuted by Experience; for either I tasted no Happiness in what was so earnestly desir'd, or the pleasure was imbitter'd to me by unexpected troubles mixed with it; I now am well contented in a State without abounding or wanting, relying intirely upon God for all things necessary for my wants.

Thirdly, This Experience has made me sensible of this certain frame in my self; That the more of outward comforts I enjoy, the more I undervalue them, and in the greater esteem I find fellowship with God, and that the evidence of special love from God by the enjoyments, is in my esteem far more valuable than the most precious

precious or most desireable things that can be obtain'd in this life. In the Enjoyments of the world, I neither find present satisfaction, nor the sweetness in the after-reflection that is in spiritual Enjoyments; but what brings Honey, has a Sting that vexes more than there is sweetness in it: This serious Christians know by experience. But Carnalists, whose Consciences are Sear'd, and whose Experience never reach further than outward Comforts, nothing can Sting them but sensible things; as Illness after Drinking, Rottenness after Whoring, and the like, affecting their Body. It is otherwise in spiritual Fellowship with God; it relishes sweetly at the present, and in the reflection upon it an evidence to the Soul of Union to Christ; for altho' the degree of Joy does not continue, yet the reality of Union abides, and the new Breathings of Christ's Spirit in his Ordinances revives the Joy. Friendship, that rational and most comfortable Blessing in humane Society, is not now so common on the Earth; when Sin abounds, the love of many waxeth cold; and where it is, it affords one of the most solid satisfactions on Earth; but it is not compleat, wanting much at the same time it is enjoyed; neither is it durable, but upon a trifle chang'd, and former Friendship made fuel to kindle and keep burning everlasting Hatred and Malice.

A Sixteenth Experience of God's method to train me into Reliance upon himself, has been, by disappointing me of one favour greatly desired and expected, on purpose to introduce a greater. The Lord has often issued forth a marvellous Mercy out of the Bosom of a disappointing-Providence; and could the effect of this Experience be otherwise than to trust God for all Events attending my life, however bad they lookt at the present, leaving them to his Will; that so, if a disappointment occur'd, I might not immediately repine, but by Patience, through former Experience and Prayer, wait without disquiet till the Divine Providence has sweetly ordered that disappointment to be for my greater good.

I could instance in this Experience, a matter of greatest worldly concern, where disappointment has fallen out contrary to desire and probable expectation, from whence has issued a Providence at first appearance not so desirable or pleasing, but a Mercy far beyond what I now know the other would have been, and has some comfortable circumstances in it not so common in such a matter. One instance greatly advancing Reliance upon God, and confirming what has been formerly laid down, of a certain correspondency between Christ's Spirit helping the Soul to Ask in Prayer, and the Lord's returning it, was, that my frame in Prayer was

was my great support, while under no other view than that of a disappointment.

Who would not in the Enjoyment of such eminent Experiences, leave all things to Heaven's conduct, and by entire dependance thereupon, with continued Prayer to be interested therein, spend a whole life through this Earth, and that with greater success to outward Affairs, less anxiety of Mind concerning them, or toil of Body to obtain them, and much more sweetness, than when brought about, and no other Agent seen therein, but outward endeavour of our selves, strength of Friends, or the like, upon whom our Trust was wholly fixed?

Seventeenthly, To advance an entire general dependance upon God, he has marvellously discovered immediateness of his Hand in matters of very small moment, and that both as a return to Prayer concerning them, and as a token of special favour in them; and tho' they have been such things as are reputed small, yet they have been accompanied with as immediateness of Providence, as clear a discovery of Divine Love, as in weighty concerns, designing thereby to bring me into a Dependance upon him for all things, the meanest not being excluded from the compass of his Providence.

Many instances of this Experience I could bring forth in respect of my going from one place to another; of Servants coming to, and going

going from me ; yea, reaching even to irrational Creatures, that I have made use of: I have had Experience, that according to my strength in Petitioning Divine Favour concerning them, and according to the time of neglecting, or beginning and continuing this seriousness, so successfulness or unsuccessfulness has occur'd.

At this very time of God's training me into a Dependence upon himself, a powerful bearing home of Scriptures upon my Soul, of Promise, for instruction, conduct, and comfort, has been a remarkable mean in God's Hand, and marvellously blessed with that great end of removing Diffidence, and settling Reliance upon himself.

The First whereof by way of Promise, was that of the 6th Chapter of *Matthew*, vers. 33. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you*: Of this Promise, till now, I could never feel the powerful Efficacy, and apply it to my self for comfort.

At my first entrance upon Business in the world, this Scripture suddenly seized my Thoughts, without any previous Meditation thereupon, or Reading it with remark in the Scriptures, but with such constancy of impression, that in diversions in real Business, at home and abroad, this Scripture would still rush upon my Thoughts: Its suddenness and constancy of impression, its suitableness to my circumstances, at that time going to engage in
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the affairs of the world, where Temptations to omit or intermit the seeking Grace in my Soul might abound, and its correspondency to Experiences that afterward occurred in my concerns on Earth, as means of founding Grace in my Soul, made me hope it was bore upon me by a Divine Power. A further confirmation and certainty whereof I have had, not only from its continuance even till this day in my Thoughts, with the powerful influence of making me seek God first in all my concerns, and to trust in him as the God that hears Prayers, but also from the marvellous method of God in my life, enabling me to use endeavours, and giving his success to them; chiefly, when I am most diligent to advance his Kingdom of Grace in my Soul; never could I say, that I was diligent and spiritual in the means of Reading, Prayer, and the like, for the advancement of Grace in my Soul, but even then all outward Comforts flow'd in upon me with great sweetness in their Enjoyments; and then Divine Providence has afforded me opportunities and success in my Temporal Affairs; yea, I never observ'd my self at any time disquieted, or under the probable or real danger of the withdrawals of these Comforts, but I always found my self out of the road of spirituality of frame, and of the diligent use of means of Grace.

To the enjoyment of this Experience, I am still held, and do hope, while I live, shall be able to apply it as a special Gift from God's
Divine

Divine and Merciful Hand: Yea, with the *Psalmist*, in the 19th *Psalms* and 49th v. I have often found it a prevailing argument in Prayer, *That the Lord would remember the word to his servant, upon which he had caus'd him to hope*; it was indeed his own work suddenly to bring and fix it upon my Thoughts, at a time when I was altogether ignorant of such a thing, as a spiritual Power accompanying any Scripture-Truth, and a beginning only to be sensible of a special conduct of Providence round me; but now it appears more plainly his work, by its confirmation, from the outward Providences, and inward workings of Christ's Spirit in my Soul since; till which confirmation, I did not experimentally understand it; and blessed be his Name, I am at quiet that he will continue my hope therein, till the Kingdom of Grace has had its Perfection here, and I passed into his everlasting Kingdom of Glory, where Promises shall be no more of use, but there shall be the perfect Fruition of our rich Priviledges, both of Grace and Glory.

A Second Scripture bore home upon my Soul with instruction, and as a mean of advancing Reliance upon God, more than upon means, was, That Scripture in *Daniel*, wherein it is said, *That by the blessing of God, the pulse nourished him; that he looked fairer and fatter than these Children fed with King's meat*. One evening in Reading this passage of God's Word, I found my Mind deeply imprest with
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Meditations upon it in an extraordinary manner, tho' many a time I had read the same Scripture, and with great seriousness, but without such depth of Thought: This made me hope at the time, that it was the work of Christ's Spirit, it proving afterwards a rule of action, and a means of advancing greater Reliance upon a Divine Blessing to food, than ever formerly I had observ'd in my self.

The Thoughts seizing me at the time, were, First, The great weight to be laid upon a Divine Blessing for the nourishment of our Bodies, as well as upon the food Eat.

Secondly, The great seriousness that is necessary in Petitioning a Divine Blessing, and the exact extension of our Petitions to all things receiv'd for that end of nourishment; thereby reproving my self and others for the formal, and overly addressing God herein; and not endeavouring the same seriousness and spirituality of Frame, as in other set and solemn Petitions, and not Petitioning God's Divine Blessing for every thing we desire Nourishment from, or Pleasure in.

Thirdly, A Resolution, and I hope I may say, a Performance, at least much better than ever before, to extend my Supplications to God for all things taken for the support of life, and in as serious a manner, as for matters of higher concern, God being the same when then address'd to, as when by solemn, long and numerous Petitions; and though to others,
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Food comes in a common way of Providence; yet to God's own Children in a line of special Favour; and therefore more Obligatory upon them to show their Trust to God for Mercies seemingly in common with others, as well as for more special concerns; and that in a way becoming the God they are more especially acquainted with; and the greater Trust they pretend, and do give to God than others, who only enjoy all those Favours, as out of the hand of a general Provider, in a common way of Distribution.

The effect of which Instruction, Reproof, and Resolution, has been in my self to avoid all opportunity of publick Petitioning a Divine Blessing upon these outward Favours, and that upon the following accounts.

First, Because of the necessity of going out of the common road, if my Resolution be faithfully performed; and any thing uncommon, either in spiritual or outward things, draws forth many times Reproachings from Carnal Persons; yea, the very apprehension of such Persons present, to my certain experience, is the occasion of marring a serious spiritual Petitioning God's Divine Blessing.

The common road of Professors in this Duty is form and brevity; and considering the mixt Company, this Duty is often to be performed with a petition for God's Divine Blessing, with, the serious thoughtfulness upon what is expressed, many times prevents the Mockings that attend a Spiritual posture of Soul in the

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performance of this Duty without a Form ; there being many conversant with us at Meals, who were it not for the power of Education and fear of Reproach, would please their Palates, without any Blessing petition'd thereupon ; and I'm sure with greater comfort, than when burden'd with a Serious Address to God, or Religious Conversation amongst themselves ; I rather therefore eschew the opportunity, than spoil my serious Address to God, having little satisfaction in performing this Duty unspiritually : And sure I am, that the mind confin'd to a Form of Thoughts and Words aforehand, must needs lay occasion of restraint upon the Breathings of a Divine Spirit, which runs with strong force of Thought upon the Soul, and great extension of Word, as any acquainted therewith, will witness of me. I grant a seriousness of thought is very agreeable to a Form in this Duty, but far different from that spirituality of Soul evidential, sensible of Christ's Spirit acting therewith ; yea, from my own Experience, I can witness that I have had my frame of mind that has been in a spiritual posture, allay'd with an overly performance of this Duty.

Brevity I accuse, as marring of a Heavenly Frame ; I must testify, that sometimes I have been in the beginning of Prayer Cold and Lazy in the Frame of my Soul ; but in the progress thereof, a holy heat has been diffused in my Affections, and therefore justly may fear, that
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if my frame be cold, passing immediately from the World to this Duty, a repeating some short Sentences in a Form will be over before Spirituality has seized my Thoughts, and so prove an occasion of preventing Spirituality : But for a serious spiritual Soul, I think him hardly capable of performing this Duty with common brevity, he being carried out many times beyond designs and words, both exposing him and the Duty to the Mocking of such, if then present, and therefore reservedness in the publick performance of this Duty I greatly affect.

Take therefore my reason thus for eschewing the Publick performance of this duty, that I may neither keep off Divine influences by form, nor short'n the sweetness thereof by brevity, nor expose my self and the duty to the ridiculing of those, who either would willingly feast upon God's good things, without ever acknowledging him the Giver, or petition his blessing to follow them, rather than cool the Vi&ctuals a degree more than suits their Palate, and gratifies the sensual Appetite.

A Second reason of eschewing Publick performance of this duty, has been because of this Spiritual frame and Heavenliness of mind I endeavour after, throughout the day, out of duty, as well as in duty, which hinders a rushing from Worldly Discourse, to a petitioning of God, with Three or Four Sentences by Roar, and sets forth a duty proceeding from a mind spiritual and actually serious. Besides, when at any time
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I am Heavenlyly carry'd out, petitioning God in any duty, I find that often Petitions and Expressions will run upon Matter that I have been formerly pleading for throughout the day, of which I should not willingly desire any Company, perhaps, to know of; and to restrain my self in this Frame is what would greatly burden my Soul, and rather incline me to lose such Comforts tho' never so grateful to Sense.

My Method therefore, and great Endeavour is, That whether others perform this Duty, or my self, I may, if possible, meet with nothing that may occasion its unspiritual performance: And when others are so short, my Soul is not at ease till I have seriously ejaculated my Thoughts to Heaven, easily done without the least knowledge to the Short-sighted Professor's round; and privacy to my self I make choice of, unless Family-relation engage me, that so neither Form nor Brevity may hinder me of so sweet an Enjoyment as spiritual Frame in the Duty; and that what bears most in my Thoughts towards God through the day, may not be prevented from being utter'd, through the fear of others knowing it, or ridiculing the Duty because of it.

Thirdly, Another Scripture was bore home upon my Soul by way of Instruction and Comfort; when one day I happen'd to be out of all Business respecting my Calling, and discovering one of the same way with my self in great
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hurry therein, some repining melancholy Thoughts begun to spring up, of which I was concernedly sensible at the time, and anxious how to suppress them; but after walking some four or five paces, I see the Bible before me, which I took up, without any design of serious reading therein: But the first Verse that my eyes fixt upon, was that of the 9th Verse of the 5th Chapter of *James*, *Grudge not one against the other*; which immediately bore home upon me with astonishing amazement, that so exactly it should suit my Circumstances, which, perhaps, might have from Lust within, and Satan without, occasion'd the neglect of regarding God in all Events, and the attributing this to Chance, or some external Accident, if I had not discover'd God's own hand in the matter: For besides God's adapting it so suitably to my present Case, by the true meaning of the words, there immediately issued relief to my anxiety, and full quiet of mind, and comfortable satisfaction, without the least repining. And I still find upon the occurrences of the like temptation, a power not reduceable to my self as the Fountain, but proceeding from Christ, and conveyed by his Spirit, working mightily in my Soul. Let therefore these prosper, and others excel me, my satisfaction is founded on God's special conduct of Providence round me, God's over-ruling all Events for such an end, as the dethroning of Corruption, and the raising of Grace to such perfection of Faith, and meet-

meetness for Heaven, as will be rewarded with an abundant entrance into that blessed Kingdom. This divine calm of Mind was the product of the Holy Spirit, the great Comforter; for meer Reason and natural Constitution cannot quiet us upon such Motives, and are but weak Bulwarks to defend against disquieting impressions when difficulties occur.

Fourthly, Having set apart some time for private Prayer, concerning a more than ordinary Affair, and reading some Scripture before it, one Verse thereof affected my thoughts by way of Instruction, more than the other parts of that portion of Scripture; it was the last Verse of the 10th Chapter of Ecclesiastes, *Curse not the King in thy thoughts, nor the rich in thy bed-chamber; for the birds of the air shall declare the voice, and the fowl with wings shall tell the matter.* In the reading whereof, such a divine Power accompanied me, that set me a resolving from that moment to eschew speaking evil privately, and that by way of whisper, against my Superiors and others; and to leave whatever might be express'd against my self in such a manner, to the permission of a Divine Hand, under whose especial Conduct I had some comfortable evidence of being stated, having at this very time often and often experienc'd, that upon reporting any thing injurious to others, either from a foundation of Self-applause, or of spreading a reproach with that privacy, that I have imagin'd it impossible the reproach could ever reach their ear; yet it has been heard of,

and providentially return'd me with the just punishment of Reproach, either from the same person, or from another, by a reproach of the same kind. And that this resolution of Conformity to this Scriptural Lesson might be the more effectually perform'd, I set it upon Record, with a design of viewing it every morning, before my entrance upon publick Conversation, to help forward that resolved watch, *of taking heed to my ways, not to sin with my tongue.* To the intermission of which watch, so many daily Temptations occur, not only from natural inclination to applaud one's self, and to disparage others, but from the ill example of others, who, upon pretension of concern and friendship for a person, and trusting to their privacy they are conversing with, whisper an ill report, with the name of the person reproach'd, and thereby draw forth a mutual discourse upon the thing, that aggravates and fixes its belief upon their minds and thoughts, that it is ready to break forth on all occasions, while the person reproached is perfectly ignorant, and perhaps as truly innocent. This is the abounding Sin of the Christians of this day, either to believe a Reproach too soon, or to aggravate it in its after-report, and neglect the speaking to the persons concern'd, for their amendment. This is privately contrary to the Rule of the Gospel, and hinders the obtaining of spiritual Blessings; yea, brings Men under the danger of that denunciation, *Psal. 101. 5. Whoso privacy*

vily slanders his neighbour, him will I cut off.

Fifthly, When I have been under great concern for the omission of Duty, and losing that delight therein that I had formerly enjoyed, then the Lord has made that *verse* of the 7th Chapter of the *Romans*, a powerful relief to my fear of its being evidence of no grace; *The law of the mind, warring against the law of the members.* And when I have found before the performance of Prayer, a struggle between doing and neglecting it, and the most trifling occasion, looking out at a Window, a great noise, and the like, delaying of my Duty, then my Soul labour'd under the weight of concern, lest it betoken'd my being altogether empty of Grace; and that till God was pleas'd to bear home this express Scripture-truth to be experienc'd in my self, and to quiet my Mind by a Sermon Preach'd upon the 1st v. of the 4th chap. of the *Hebrews*, *Let us fear lest we come short of that rest*; wherein in the Explication of Fear, so far as Duty, he discover'd the mixture of Corruption and Grace in a Christian Soul here on Earth, and that strugglings often rising thence, would cause fear in the Soul, but what was no ground of fear, unless when overcome by them; after which time I begun to observe the victory over these disturbing fears within, and the exercise of a greater watch unto Prayer, to endeavour their repulse.

Sixthly, Another Scripture powerfully bore home, has been that of the 16th of *Matthew*, where Christ desires his Disciples to *Remember the five Loaves* ; which Scripture, then and ever since, in the steps of God's advancing Reliance in my Soul, has been of great use ; and when God has seem'd to withdraw any sorts of Mercies, it has made me have immediate recourse to former Experiences, with the good effect of accusing my self for my little faith, and forgetfulness so soon of his former preventing Mercies, hastening me to Prayer for strength of Faith and Reliance upon him : Let this be upon the Thoughts of poor Creatures under God's sensible withdrawals, to prevent sinking tears, lest they are without Grace, when there is Grace in Sincerity, but not in that sensible strength which by Prayer, and the remembrance of God's former Mercies, they should diligently endeavour to obtain.

Seventhly, That Scripture of *seeking the Lord while he may be found*, and *calling upon him while he is near*, bore home in sweet Exercise, at such a time when God's Breathing has been sensibly upon my Soul, raising my frame to a Heavenliness of Mind ; when the Holy Spirit by warm influences excites the Soul, 'tis a season of Grace to the unrenewed, and a precious opportunity and advantage to the real Christian. This has made me to prize the smallest motions of the Divine Spirit, not to quench them, and watchful of entertaining them in the exercise of Meditation

itation and Prayer, eschewing what Conversation might at that time bring levity of Mind to dethrone them.

Eighthly, Another Scripture impress seriously upon my Heart, was the 21st and 22d verses of the 18th chapter of *Matthew*; *Then said Peter, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him; till seven times? And Jesus said unto him, Until seventy times seven.* This has been a Scripture accompanied with great power, to repel risings of Corruption towards Revenge, and perfectly to quiet my Mind with a Reliance upon God concerning the matter. The first Experience whereof met me in the Streets, where hearing of a false and unmerited Aspersion upon my self, at whose hands I deserv'd better; immediately a design of Revenge was rising, and was carried further on by meditating upon it, till coming home, and entering my Chamber, and taking the Bible in my hands, that very Scripture was offered to my View, and by the influence of Heaven, made an assisting-instrument of quiet at the time, and ever since a strong help to watch my self in the like case: Its suitableness to my circumstances, its effectual power restraining me from complying with Satan and inward Corruption, and inclining and enabling me to obey God, whose Will is declared in his Word, was a testimony that a gracious Providence brought that Scripture to my sight.

Ninthly, When Reproaches against me, and malicious Designs had a probability of taking effect, and have been turn'd into other Events, against the Design, Wish, or Expectation of my Enemies, then that Scripture of the 11th verse of the 41st Psalm, *By this I know thou favourest me, because my enemies triumph not over me*, has been not only confirm'd, but imprest upon me with much inward Comfort.

At one time the whole 15th Psalm was bore upon my Thoughts with that strength and continuance, that I was continually desiring Conformity to it, and measuring my Actions by its Rule, till God gave into my Soul the Evidence of some measure of Conformity to it, with other spiritual Comforts at that time.

A multitude of other Scriptures have been applied to my Soul at the times of needing Comfort and Instruction, but they would enlarge my Discourse too much, and might occasion a discovery of the Author, and therefore I chuse rather to stop here, having enumerated so many as afford a Testimony to the reality of Christ's Spirit, applying to the Precepts and Promises of the Word, and bearing home Scripture Truths as instructive, to instruct and remember us of our Duty, and encourage us to persevere in it till we arrive at Heaven.

*Experiences of God's Spirit's sensible withdraw-
ings in Prayer from helping the Christian to
ask what he will not return, though in his
design to Petition.*

THE First Experience whereof was, That though I had designed to have Pray'd for an event, yet in the Prayer I have not directed a Petition for it; and though I have intended in the performance of that Duty, several times to Pray for it, I have been restrain'd.

Secondly, When one day I designed to renew my Requests to God for obtaining a matter in my morning's Supplication, my desires were fervently excited; but in the afternoon I was much restrain'd, and in some hours afterwards, my Soul was drawn forth earnestly to seek it; and upon enquiry, I found that the three different alterations in the matter that day, and the different times of the alterations, exactly suited the times of different Prayer.

To illustrate which, I'll give you one instance amongst many, concerning a Friend whose Circumstances I put up to the Lord three several times in one day, and suitable to my great enlargement for them in my Morning-Prayer, were much better; but suitable to my Afternoons constraint, were for some
hours

hours in racking misery ; and suitable to my return in spirituality in Prayer for them, there was a return of mercy in their relief, the circumstance of time exactly suited one another, that there was a refreshment from Pains, and a return of them according as Prayer was intense and enlarg'd, or restrain'd, of which I made careful Observation.

Thirdly, Another Experience of constraint from Prayer, has been concerning a matter, which (all circumstances considered) was very likely to succeed, but not finding my Heart in a frame to pray for it, I suspected the issue, and accordingly it was not effected.

An instance thereof was, concerning the dearest Relation I had on Earth, who being Sick for 6 weeks, I was restrained from Prayer, with Reliance upon God for restoring Mercy ; and the issue was, the Death of that Beloved Person, for whose recovery thorough the course of their Illness, I could never put up one serious Petition.

Two very late passages I can set down greatly establishing my self, and marvellous in themselves. One was concerning a Person of great Worth, of whose Death I had information in all probability certain, but being in the Street all alone, I found my self enlarged to pray for their Soul's Salvation, and that with marvellous Pleasure, as if I had been assuredly certain of
their

their future eternal Happiness; and being afterwards in serious Prayer, I found the same sweetness as I have enjoyed, in Spiritual Breathings from above; upon this, I humbly said to one who was my Bosome-friend, I was not of the opinion, that the Person I pray'd for was dead; and imparted my Reason hereof, That the Lord by his Spirit had help'd me in sweet spirituality to supplicate for them: Accordingly we had an account of the Person's being better; but the next morning following, I found such a restraint from Praying for that Person, that I then said to my Friend, That the Person was Dead, and that very account we had presently after.

The other passage was, Concerning one to be Executed, for whose Salvation I found my Affections very ardently drawn forth in Prayer to the Father of Mercies; but in Prayer for his Life, my Desires were dried up, and my Tongue did as it were cleave to the Roof of my Mouth. Three times I found this change in my self, being always carried out with fervency and freedom to Pray for his Soul, but restrain'd and discourag'd to Pray for his Life; observing this difference in my self, I told an intimate Friend, That I had good hope of his eternal Salvation, but no hope of his Pardon. The issue was, the Condemned Person was Reprieved for two days, and was afterward Executed; and at his Death,
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his Behaviour was so humble and Christian, that the Minister that attended him, declared his great satisfaction, that he died a Penitent Believer.

Many instances of the same kind I could set down, but I shall only add the following instance: I was going to see a Friend that was Sick, and address my self to God in secret Prayer before I went, but a kind of terrour seiz'd my Mind, and Words stopt, that I could not offer up one Petition in any seriousness, or with any hopes of being heard for recovery: And going to see the Person, found that they had been dead some time before. This was a discovery to me, that the Holy Spirit does often withdraw his Assistance to Ask for that which he knows God will not bestow.

Expe-

Experiences of God's Method of training me to the serious, awful, and delightful hearing of Sermons.

First, by suiting Sermons upon a Sabbath unexpectedly to things my Thoughts have greatly ruminated on through the week, and by bearing home instruction and comfort to my Soul thereby. One instance, (without expressing many I could give) was, when through the week greatly thoughtful concerning the knowledge of effectual calling, and my evidence thereof in my Soul; and happening to be one day in a Friend's Closet, where several Books lay, I lookt into one, and being pleased with the subject, I brought it home, without knowing that any thing concerning Effectual Calling was in it; in the perusal whereof I found an Appendix concerning Effectual Calling, which greatly pleased me at the time, my Thoughts being then in great Exercise concerning it, but still without any sensible satisfaction in my self from using it. The following Sabbath I found a strong inclination to hear another Minister than whom I usually heard, without argument to my self against him, or any sensible and more grateful motion to hear another. The Inclination grew so strongly and suddenly, that no objection could stop my design, tho' I met with several; and at my hearing the Minister, found his Sermon upon Effectual Calling,

Calling, and accompanied with such satisfactory Instructions, and sweet Sense of my being effectually called, that I was amazed and ravished at the time; which plainly proved the word Preached to be the power of God, bringing forth evidences which are means to Salvation.

Secondly, By bearing home Duties with such Power of Christ's Spirit in the hearing of a Sermon, that immediately their performance has been resolved, and the practice dutifully and delightfully continued. One remarkable instance was, By a Sermon of a faithful Minister of Christ, Mr. *Showers*, in a *December*, Preparatory to the Sacrament; wherein he prest, That as People, at that time usually, were a considering their Account-Books, to know their Circumstances; so we might at the same time every year, take an Account of our Souls, to know the State of Grace, whether growing, decaying, or at a stand; which greatly imprest me at the time, and was a mean in God's Hand to persuade me to the Custom thereof; which ever since I have used; and not only then, but every night, and at the end of every month; and blessed be God it has been of great Service to my self in the discovery of the advancement of my inward Change, and in the preserving of me from misapprehensions of God's Ways with me, helping me to know what Grace is most in exercise, and what Corruption most tempting,

ing, and a continual discovery of God's Method suiting his Providences to each. I impart it, as an Example to others, and to help forward their comfortable Pilgrimage on Earth.

Another instance of that Experience, was, In the powerful Influence that accompanied my Soul in hearing the Sermons Preached upon Family-Duty, by which, tho' I always perform'd Evening Family-Prayer, yet had never performed it in the Morning, till by that means God was pleas'd to inforce it as Duty, and help me to practice it with Comfort: And if these Ministers had no other Seal accompanying their Religious Undertakings, this one may Comfort them, and let them know it was not in vain.

Thirdly, By influencing Sermons with a power to suppress Evils predominant at the time of hearing, which gave me ground to fear they would interrupt me in that Duty. I have often found my self under Disquiet, and in great fear lest the Disquiet should occasion an unprofitable Hearing, it being natural for a thing disquieting to draw forth the Mind upon it, even when it ought to fix upon a thing of higher concern; and yet I have been so far from losing the advantage of this blessed mean of Grace, that it has been through the Blessing of God effectual to remove the Disquiet it self, and to bring me into a sweet spiritual frame of Soul. How ought this greatly to caution us,
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not to add one folly to another, and by pretension of unfitness to hear, to neglect hearing, it being a means by Divine Assistance to make you fit? How often have the Prophane of the Earth, vainly said, They were as knowing as their Ministers, and understood as much as they could acquaint them? And why should they go to hear what they know before-hand? Never considering, Hearing as a means not only instructing their Judgments, but changing their Hearts, establishing them Experimentally in what they know, and raising them by a Divine Hand to a serious spiritual heavenly frame of Soul, the Element a Saint desires continually to breathe in.

Fourthly, By ordering the Sermons of Persons dislik'd from some circumstances in their way, as means both of Instruction and Comfort; and the circumstance despised, more spiritualizing my frame than ordinary, to prevent partial respects to Ministers, and to see the assisting means that God affords us, and to encourage us in the use of the means that God affords us, the most unlikely means being truly successful, as it is influenced with a Divine Spirit.

One instance whereof was, Before I happened to know or hear a worthy Minister of this City, I ordinarily exclaim'd against his Singing of Hymns, not as unlawful; for Hymns, Psalms, and Spiritual Songs, are the parts of
Praise

Praise under the New Testament ; but lest it should give encouragement to others, not so found in Learning and Divinity, not only to neglect the use of Psalms, but to compose what might be erroneous, weak, and dissonant from them, one day I found a mighty inclination in my self to hear him, without any rational motion to it at the time : And tho' I was in an extraordinary lazy cold frame, yet no sooner did I enter the place, but I met with the Hymn I had so much exclaim'd against, plainly made use of as a mean to bring me into a most ravishing spiritual frame of Soul, which continued with me in all the after publick and private Duties of the day.

I have also Experienc'd, That when upon the consideration of a low esteem of a Minister for his weak parts, and unsuitable way of Preaching to what I wanted, I have withdrawn to some place else, that that very day I have had an unusual Testimony of the Worth of this Minister's Sermon whom I left ; and instead of meeting with that sweetness I have expected, or sometimes have had from the other, when I have gone with some inward constraint, I have found my self in as bad a frame as ever, without any satisfaction and establishment, but rather an uneasiness of Mind concerning it.

O how instructing is this of the Inefficacy of the best means without a Divine Power, and of the Efficacy of the weakest means with a Divine Power ! It is neither learned matter,
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nor fine Oratory, that will savingly instruct the Mind, or comfort the Soul, though it may affect the fancy, and inform the judgment for a time; how instructing is it of a dependance upon God in the use of means he lays providentially in our way as our Duty, unless when God goes out of his ordinary road, of which we are not to make a Rule? If they be weak means or strong means, it is according to the influence of a Divine Spirit that they become effectual; and if you slight a weaker Preacher, under whose Instruction you are by the Designation of Providence, and chuse to go to one more learned and pleasing, you have not so good a Warrant to expect a Blessing, partly because of your neglecting the appointed means for your spiritual Profit; partly lest you be in danger to limit God to afford his Blessing to the Preaching of one, and not of another; whereas his working is as glorious, if not more, with a weak instrument, than by a strong; and it is the plain serious Sermon that I have many times found most pleasing to my self, however other sorts have ravished my Senses at the time.

The Method I used that my hearing the Word Preach'd might be profitable, was and is, to examine my self, whether I could assent to the Truth of what I heard, from my own Experience, as well as the Minister's Assertion, by which I was established and comforted, when my private Experience was consonant to the
 Doctrine

Doctrine of a publick Preacher: But when this was wanting, if the Doctrine was proved from Scripture, my Petitions to Heaven have been spiritually carried forth, That the Truth might be sealed to my Soul by feeling its Efficacy; and I have in a short time found my Desires answered, by the operations of Divine Providence, and of the Holy Spirit in me. The right hearing of the Word consists not in a grave outward gesture, or giving ear to a Sermon, either upon the Fundamental Principles of Christianity to be believ'd, or the practical Duties to be perform'd, but you must compare your Faith and Life with the Doctrine of the Gospel, and that seriously, without the intermixture of wandring Thoughts, and with fervent Prayer for a Divine Blessing; sometimes God is pleased to give Grace more richly by a weak than by a more able instrument: This reproves many, who content themselves with attendance upon the Ministry of the Word, and with an outward grave behaviour in Hearing, but never seek after an inward frame of Heart suitable to the Word; so that a serious frame of Soul, as well as a grave gesture of Body, a reflecting upon, and comparing it with your own Experience, as well as a reflecting upon and comparing it to your own Notions, I recommend to all that would hear God's Word Preach'd with profit thereby.

Experiences of God's Method in training me to the Knowledge of right participating the Lord's Supper.

PRevious to which, let me premise my Opinion thereof, and Practice then while only under the Notional Knowledge of Christianity and the Power of Education, and that in the following Parts.

First, That by the strength of Education I believ'd the Sacrament an extraordinary Ordinance, solemnly to be gone about, and extraordinarily to be prepared for; wonderful Communion with God being there to be enjoy'd, of which I never then had felt any Experience, tho' I had once partaken of it with all seriousness, by the instruction and example of others, and my own Thoughts of the solemnity of that Ordinance, but without any other seriousness than what is wrought by a Minister's affecting Discourse, and delivery of an affecting Subject; but spiritual Communion with Christ, without which, Sacrament Communion is unprofitable, and the discovery of God's love to the Soul, which Holy Ministers have spoke of as more valuable than all the World; all this was Mystery to me, and not desired; but now, blessed be his Name, has been Reveal'd, and Experimented in my Soul by the means of Grace.

Secondly,

Secondly, When I felt an inward change in my Soul, and I had clearer knowledge of the Nature and End of that Ordinance, my intention and manner of performance was Spiritual, and the Benefits concomitant and consequent with that Ordinance were enjoy'd. It's true, that Prayer was the first Duty wherein I felt a serious hearty delight, and understood fellowship with God ; but gradually I advanc'd to the Experience of the same delight and heavenliness of frame in other Duties, and amongst the rest, in that Duty of the Sacrament, but without that high flight of Joy as sometimes I have had in Prayer ; but I still imagin'd, that though I had not attain'd its experience so much in that Duty, yet it was to be enjoy'd therein, and that God would please in due time to give me the Sense thereof.

Thirdly, That no sooner I had the Sense of this inward change, but as soon my judgment was clear, as to the repetition of this Duty of the Sacrament ; for before, neither the Reading of the Institution, nor Ministers preaching thereupon, were so powerful as to induce me to its often performance, which frequency I once imagin'd Sinful, or at least the occasion of leading to a careless Sinful performance thereof: Satan like an Angel of light, disturb'd my tender Conscience with this Argument against frequent Communion, That I was not

to partake of the Lord's Table without a Week's solemn Preparation ; but I was more instructed concerning my Duty, by my own Call afterward ; for once being in great Affliction both inward and outward, I resolved to go to the Lord's Supper, imagining it a season in which I could best be serious, and thereby better prepar'd than when the pressure of the Affliction was over : And if there were any such thing to be experienc'd as the great Comforts the Saints declar'd, I might then probably feel them ; and accordingly did partake with greater Gravity and inward Thoughtfulness than otherwise I should have been able to do ; but I did not feel those raised Affections, nor that inward Fellowship with God, or ravishing Joy that I did expect ; which disappointment greatly concern'd me, Satan forcing home upon me this suggestion, of its being an Evidence how unprepar'd I was, and what an unacceptable Sacrifice I offered to God ; which made me consult a spiritual Friend, whose Sincerity and Judgment I had in very high value : His Answer was, The Spirit of God is not to be limited ; God's ways of imparting himself is not confin'd to the time of Partaking this Ordinance, but you may judge of your right Performance by your frame before and after, as well as in the Duty. This greatly reviv'd me, and was a mean of quieting me, and of keeping me in the frequent Participation of the Ordinance ; the Truth of his Words I have found by many Experiences.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, I have sometimes found great heavenliness of frame before the Partaking of the Ordinance, and sometimes after it, even when in the time of the Duty I have been coldly affected, and without sensible Comfort; Upon hearing my complaint, my Friend reply'd, Though God in training you to the knowledge of himself and his ways, has dealt with you as a darling Child, with wonderful smiling Providences, think it not strange if having obtain'd his end of working Faith of Reliance, he change his Method, and tries the Grace he has wrought in your Soul.

Fifthly, In the mean time this Blessed Saint being at a distance from me, I often pray'd, O that I had fellowship with God in this Ordinance, that I might feel therein what others do, or what I have felt in other Duties, I should be satisfied if I should never enjoy it there again; unbelief still working in me. It pleas'd God in his wonderful Condescension to comply with this desire, and thereby to discover the greatness of my weakness, as well as the advantage of Reliance upon God in the use of means, without limiting him to our desires; for in the participating of the next Sacrament, I was admitted to such a sweet ravishing Enjoyment that I never had before Experienc'd in that Duty, which persuad'd me of the Truth of what I have often heard; but such a disquieting darkness was consequent both in my

Mind and outward Affairs, that I by the rich Mercy and Power of God was then help'd, sweetly to resign my desire to his Will, and to supplicate for his influences, as he pleased to dispense them, never limiting God to things or times further than as suitable to his Omniscent Will; by this Experience I was helpt in all my concerns, less as well as greater, to cast them at Heaven's Gate, to hope in his Mercy for them, with this desire only, that I might by the Spirit of Grace and Supplication, be assisted to make known my Requests to God with Faith and Resignation, so as to be accepted of him; and in this I find my Hearts Ease.

I have since esteem'd it Duty, and had ardent Desire of Partaking the Lord's Supper every Month. While my Religion was merely from Education, I thought once in a year or two enough, to partake of this Ordinance, but since my regard to my Sovereign's and Saviour's Command, *Do this in remembrance of me*, and my performance in Obedience to this Command, I have enjoy'd ravishing sweetness in Communion with Christ in this Duty: And I shall add, That the frequent repeating of this Ordinance is attended with great advantage; for by Preparatory Examination, I am more fully acquainted with my Spiritual State, with my present Corruptions and Graces stronger or weaker, and the way how God makes this Duty a mean to suppress the one, and raise the

the other, with my Defects in the performance of this Duty ; and I have a fuller sight of Christ in all-sufficient merits in his Treasures of Grace that are open'd to all that come with Holy Affections to him. The serious and frequent renewing our Covenant with Christ in this Ordinance, will endear him to us, and engage us to live to him who died for us ; and the warm impression of his love will be maintain'd in our Souls, which is too apt to cool and decline, unless fed and reviv'd by the frequent Contemplation of our Crucified Saviour.

Seventhly, In the beginning of the Celebration of this Ordinance I have oft been in a cold frame ; but at the approach of the Elements this frame has chang'd, and my Soul has been sweetly carried forth to petition for the imparting the Priviledges of Christ's Body broken, and Benefits annex to it ; and I have found from receiving the Elements, the strengthening power of the Spirit, verifying our Saviour's Words, *That his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed.* This has been a means to preserve me from Anxieties, and to persevere in the frequent Commemorating of Christ's Death prescrib'd in his last Will : I also find, that the more frequent renewing my Vows, makes me more careful to perform them, and that it's more easie to take an account of our Faithfulness to God and our Souls, or of our Neglects, once every Month, than when there is a greater distance between the time of our
Receiv-

Receiving, and Examining our selves, how correspondent our Conversations have been to our Covenant seal'd in that Ordinance.

Eighthly, At the time of partaking this Ordinance, I have often desir'd with ardent Affections, two Things, That I might be spiritually-minded in the whole course of my life, and that Holiness may be advancing in my Soul till I arrive at perfection. This will be attended with solid Comfort, according to the Promise, *Great peace to those who keep thy law*: And altho' we are to seek the shining face of God, the joyful assurance of his love in the use of his Ordinances; yet since the shedding abroad in the Soul the clear Evidences of God's Love, is a free Dispensation according to the Divine Pleasure, my principal request has been to have a pure Heart and Holy Conversation, depending upon God for inward Comfort.

From which Experiences you may upon good ground fear, that when the excuse of neglecting the Sacrament, is because of its being a Solemn Ordinance, and therefore to be seldom receiv'd, is an Error of the Carnal Mind, and a Temptation of Satan to divert us from using frequently that means of Grace, which confirms our Faith, inflames our Love, and secures our hope of Glory, and makes us more exact and constant, and comfortable in the everlasting way.

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I shall conclude this with Advice to those who have not felt those Joyful Emanations in this Ordinance which they have expected, and others of the Saints have enjoy'd; Be not discourag'd from your Duty, but with unfainting perseverance, continue in the use of the means of Grace; The Lord waits to be gracious, to bestow his Comforts in the best season: There is sweet Peace in our Obedience to the Divine Commands, tho' we have not raptures of Joy; And our Obedience is more pleasing to God, when notwithstanding all difficulties and discouragements, it's with Conscience to his commanding-Will perform'd, than when it's made easie by sensible Comforts.

THE
APPLICATORY,
AND
SECOND PART
OF
This Discourse.

Christianity, as is described in the Gospel, is Experienc'd in the Souls of Real Christians, in different degrees of Knowledge and Power ; but the most who are Christians in Profession, are strangers to its vital Efficacy.

The reason of this diversity is, Because the most rest in the speculative Notion of the Christian Religion, and are contented with the external Character of others ; others are cleansed and changed by the Truths of the Gospel, and are inward Christians.

Among Christians in Title there are various Divisions and contrary Sentiments, according
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to the Principles of the Education, which often cause violent Contentions among them.

Among real Christians there are Differences, but not of so deep a nature; Some Christians are weaker by damping of this powerful Principle of Regeneration, through too long omission of the means of Grace, or by too deep mixing the Thoughts and Affections in the Business of the World; or by a levity of Mind in their indulging too free a use of sensitive Pleasures that are innocent in their nature. And from these Reasons it is, that spiritual Influences are obstructed, and the Divine Nature in Christians is not so lively and vigorous as in others, who regard their Souls, and internal things, with great application and diligence, sometimes carnal Pride insinuates into those who are real Christians; and to maintain their Parties, and to be distinguish'd from others, will with Heat contend for their Opinions in things that are not clear, nor of great moment, as if they were Fundamental Doctrines.

There are some Christians that have not only the life of Grace planted in them, but the liveliness of Grace; they are working and watchful to prevent any impression and taint of Evil from the Contagion of the World where-with they are encompass'd; And they are watchful unto Good, they are ready to exercise every Grace in its season, and by a continual Derivation of strength from Christ, they are preserved from sinful Errors and irregular Passions.

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Our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ has paid the price of our Redemption, and that we may have an interest therein, and enjoy the Privileges thereof, as evidence and earnest of Heaven God has appointed means whereby we may obtain this Blessed end; means that are suitable in their use to rational and lapsed Creatures, in their humancapacity, such as exclude boasting in ourselves, and of Presumption, Licentiousness, and security in a carnal Conversation; these means are prescrib'd in the Gospel, as Prayer, Meditation, Hearing, and the Participation of the Lord's Supper.

These are the Sphere of the Holy Spirit's Activity, in these we draw near to God, and he draws near us; By these means Christ with all his saving Benefits is applied to Souls; By these they are revived from the Death of Sin, and restored to the favour and Image of God; They live in Communion with him, and are confirmed thereby against the Temptations of the Evil Spirit, who rules the World.

Those who neglect the holy and constant use of these means, whether from the delusion of their Minds, or the corruption of their Hearts, will find, that Darkness is their guide, and the issue of their way will be fatal and destructive.

Let me therefore apply the foregoing Narrative thus: There are some Professors that have knowledge in an eminent degree, and are of a fair unblemisht Conversation, by the advantage

vantage and impresson of Education, but are strangers to the inward power of Godliness as ignorant Heathens: Let such duly consider the Case, and neither despair, for the Divine Spirit can quicken them; nor delay the serious and diligent use of means which God has made effectual for the Conversion and Salvation of others: Let them observe both the outward Providences of God, and the inward Workings of his Spirit, and apply themselves to God in the Ordinances, both private and publick, that they may receive renewing Grace of God, and be preserved from destructive Evils.

If a Notional Knowledge of God's Word, and an unblemish'd outward Conversation, be no real Christianity, no certain Testimony of Real and Saving Grace, How utterly void of it are the Prophane? To them I would give this Counsel, Not to be averse from Serious and Real Religion, upon the account of some Professors who have only a name to live, but are dead; or from a conceit that the Christian Religion is so extremely rigorous, as to deprive us of all Natural Comforts; or upon the account of different Opinions in the Christian World; but to remove all Prejudices, and to endeavour to understand the Gospel, to believe the Doctrines, to obey the Precepts of it, and then they will find Christianity to be more than an outward Profession, a serious Divine Principle, regulating the Heart and Life; and that it is to be obtained

tained of God by every sincere Seeker of it; and that it allows the temperate Use of Natural Comforts, and only forbids the licentious Abuse of them, whereby men become most unlike God, and are *like the beasts that perish*: And the lawful sober Enjoyments of Nature are consistent with the Joy of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of the Saints; which is infinitely more satisfying and lasting than all the Pleasures of Sense, for which so many lose Heaven, and are condemned to Eternal Torments.

If Christianity and its Power may be really felt in the Soul, and yet damp'd by the too long intermission of the Means of Grace, and clouded by the admixture of too much of self, producing a kind of Christians lazy in the obtaining the continued Power of Christ's Spirit in their Souls, and so are in danger both of long intermissions of fellowship with God, and breaking of fellowship one to another; more dishonouring God than either the mere Professor, or Profane, who never experienc'd the Reality and Comfort of True Christianity:

To such I would apply this Exhortation, Not only to be in the Right Use of Means, but in the more Continued Right Use, than ever formerly; for undoubtedly, if the Means of Grace be the ways by which he walks, and by which he communicates to Believers, (to the truth whereof all experiencing Christians will put their Seal), then the oftner Christians walk in those ways, the oftner and the more they receive both
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of Knowledge and Comfort from God ; which undoubtedly is the reason why some real Christians go beyond others in the knowledge of his ways, and are in the more close walking according to the Rule of his Word, with more inward Fellowship with God, both in the Means of Grace, and common Conversation.

That therefore the Word of God (the doubting whereof being one great occasion of Error and Vice) may be experienc'd as Truth, and the means leading thereto given forth, I shall previously lay down Two Propositions, the first Instructive, the other Cautionary.

The first is, That all the Children of God in their Pilgrimage-state are under Three sorts of Conducts.

The first is that of God's Word, the Foundation of our Faith, and the Infallible Rule by which we are to judge of all Doctrines, of all our Experiences, and all the Passages of Providence.

The second is that of the Divine Spirit, who according to the Promise of Christ, instructs us in all Saving Truth by the Word, and brings it to our remembrance to guide us safely to Heaven.

The third is that of Divine Providence, sometimes enlightning what seemed dark in the Word of God, and in the Actings of Christ's Spirit, but founded upon his Word of Truth, and agreeable to both, though the dispensations of

Providence are no Certificate of God's special love to men ; yet we are assured by the Scriptures, that there is a peculiar tender Providence of God, that regards his Children, which is declarative of his special Love ; and by a serious observation of it, their Duty and Comfort will be encouraged and improved.

Secondly, Cautionary ; Not to limit the Spirit of God to any particular way or time of working in the Soul, either in planting of Grace, or its further growth. Though by observation of outward Providences God was pleased to bring me to the first serious sense of my self, and to a dependance upon God for Life and for Salvation ; and by marvellous steps of his outward dispensations, joined with the inward Workings of his Spirit, he has begun and increased a gracious Change in my Soul ; yet he has used various methods in the Conversion and Sanctification of others ; which whether External or Internal, if observed and remembred, would seal to Souls the Truth of Christianity, in opposition to all its Opposers. There is a clear discovery of the Divine Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, in the different means that God is pleased to use for the saving of Souls ; all which are to be considered with Reverence, and to be complied with by Obedience ; the end of all being our Holiness, as preparatory to Eternal Happiness.

The first Duty or Means I would have you apply yourselves to, is that of observation of
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outward Providences ; this having been so effectual in me, I earnestly recommend it to the serious practice of all concern'd for their salvation ; but that you may know in what method rightly to observe, I will give its Characters in the parts I have found so advantageous to myself.

First, You must observe all sorts of outward Providences ; great and more remarkable, lesser and not so palpable.

Secondly, You must observe all Circumstances that attend such Providences, and set them upon Record, on purpose to reflect and compare one with the other ; many confirming Providences have lost their savour and establishing effect, as much by missing some Circumstances thereof, as by forgetting of the whole : By this neglect some have had misapprehensions of God, and false conceits of themselves. The Circumstance of time wherein that Nobleman's Son was recovered, *John 4. 52.* exactly answering the hour when Christ said unto him, *Thy Son liveth* ; was the convincing-proof that the Cure was performed by Christ, and consequently of the truth of his being sent from God. In like manner, the observation of the return of my Prayers, with Success answerable to the fervency of my desires, and Unsuccessfulness of Prayer when I have been cold, and not duly affected in that Duty, has confirmed my belief, That it was from the Excitation of Christ's Spirit that

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enabled me to pray, and from his excellent Goodness the return of my Prayer.

Thirdly, You must observe outward Providences with improvement: The Lord's design in laying passages of Providence before you, is not only to view them, but to see Him in them, and thereby to understand his Being, with the glorious Attributes of his Wisdom, Power, and loving-kindness to Man, and that with the suitable Improvement of Eying him in all things, seeking to him for guidance in Means, and happy Events of all things.

Observation unimproved, serve not God's Honour on Earth, and will serve your selves no other way than by heaping up Aggravations to your Accusation before the great Judge's Tribunal, for neglecting to improve his precious Talents by Reliance upon him, and Glorifying his Love.

To excite your Observation under these three Characters, I'll lay before you the following Motives.

First, God's own encouragement to it, *Psal. 109. 43. Who so is wise, and will observe these things, they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.* If in God's account Observation be Wisdom, and accompanied with the blessed discovery of his loving-kindness, can you blame my Friendship in pressing you to make use thereof to obtain a Wisdom to discover and baffle the falshood and errors of the Foolish,

Foolish, (though Wise in their own Eyes) and to enjoy a sense of God's Divine Favour?

The Psalmist is giving an account of some remarkable outward Providences attending Nations, Churches, and particular Persons, and then concludes, *That who is so wise to observe such things, shall learn the knowledge of God, and his loving kindness to their Souls.* If Christians of our Age had but been exact in the observation of National Church-Providences, our Wisdom had more shin'd in the times of the Gospel, Scriptural Fulfillings had been more clear, and Errours respecting such things had less abounded than they do in our days. What a little proportion of Care does the publick Men of our Age bear in recording the marvellous steps of Providences, concerning the Nations and Churches of the Earth, to that Care of God's publick Officers under the Old and New Testament? Our Civil Records abound from one year to another, with all Testimonies that advance the Honour of Princes and People; but where is the Record of a Divine Hand in the wonderful Works of Providence, respecting Churches, Nations, and particular Christians, for the vindicating of his Honour, and the discovery of our infinite Obligations to him, that his Authority may be born up on Earth, and those discountenanced who refuse the Lord to reign over them. What more clouds the discovery of God than the unmindfulness of Divine Providences? In

the room whereof, the conduct of Chance, the agency of natural Wit and Policy, has taken place in our Observation, Admiration and Dependance; and God has been neglected in his Dispensations; and trusting with a boasting in our selves for the bringing about Events encouraged.

If publick Providences concerning our Nations and Church, since our late Revolution, had been with all their Circumstances strictly remarkt, and set upon Record, there are none of us but who could own God's agency in them, and make the words of the *Psalmist* ours, *They got not the land in possession by their own swords, neither did their own arm save, but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance going along with them.*

I hope, tho' Marvellous and National Providences have not had place in any of our Publick Records, for fixing the Faith of a Deity, and his Divine Providence; yet the Private Records of Particular Christians are fill'd therewith. I say again, Has God been so visible in the outgoings of his Providence since, and at the late Revolution, and are we still attributing the Events that have fallen out for us, to National Strength of Policy, Treasure and Courage? How often has God turned the most Politick Methods of the Wise, to lay bare and open its Insufficiency? And how has the Instruments of War, adorned with Courage, been swept off? That from Nations so abounding there-

therewith, How few appear at this day? How near is our Treasure to be exhausted, by vast Expence of War, and by Scarcity of Current Money? Has this no Language? Or has its Voice never entred the Ears and Hearts of the People of the Nations? It is the black Sign to me, the little Sight of God in his Providence, though he has been so Visible; and the little Improvement thereof, by dependance upon him in the use of Means: Though our Means were fewer, and of less strength, it should not afford me so dismal a Prospect of things to come, as the disregard of God in all our Enjoyments, the little dependance we shew upon God, by our solemn and serious Addresses to him, and by our Endeavours to please him, in walking conform to his Will. Did ever Error and Vice abound more in our Reformed Nations? Were Christians ever more lazy than in our days, spending their time in the full Excess of Riot of all those things that God, in condescending Love, has bestowed upon us, and thereby distinguishing us from other Nations? How many times does God bring private Christians, yea, Nations and Churches, to great imminent Dangers, before he pours out his Smiles, on purpose to make us sensible of that regard of God we ought to have in his Providences round us, of our Duty to cry unto him in Publick and Closet-Addresses? And if these were the Effects of our Troubles at this day, if we were brought to far greater Pinches of Extremity

than we are or can be at, I should not doubt but to behold the Returns of Providential Smiles upon our outward things, and spiritual Influences upon our Souls with Riches, and inward Peace amongst Christians yet in our Land.

It was but this Summer, when God providentially, by the great and continued Rains, threatned Scarcity of Bread, and in merciful Condescension suffer'd it to fall out, when a Fast was appointed to be kept for Success to our KING; that at the same time, by the Rains visible before us, we might join in Prayers to God for the one as well as the other; otherwise we might, perhaps, have been brought nearer to an Extremity. Before we had publickly sought God on that account, an additional step of Condescension to the other, was in God's hearing of Prayer, the Rains immediately, as it were, ceasing the very Evening of the Fast-day, with a Weeks fair and warm weather. By the observation of God's Method thus with us, I hope we have learnt to see God in his Providences, and to meet him in the use of Prayer upon the first appearance of any such danger; if it should threaten us in the following Year, it is either as a punishment for not going on in the observation of, and dependance upon God, with crying to him by Prayer, or to lead us to the repeating of, and continuance in these Duties. What is mention'd concerning this Passage, I would have appl'd to all Providences of God fit to be observ'd and improved, that

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we may know what that blessed Duty of Dependence upon God means, and may taste of its blessed fruits both upon Souls and Bodies.

In this discovery of a Divine Hand in the out-going of Providences, a fair reproof arises, First, To the Prophane, who reject the impression of a Divine Providence, and will not observe his ways of it, lest they be brought to a Sense of the just Power above, and be under terror for despising his Laws that are not pleasing to the Carnal Appetites.

Secondly, To the meer Professor and lazy Christian, who would limit God in his Providence to matters of great moment, and not extend it to all events, tho' the Scripture, as well as Christian Experience, bears sufficient Testimony thereto.

The Scripture tells us, *Matthew 10. 30. Luk. 12. 7. That the very hairs of our heads are all numbred*, and that consequently his Divine Providence influenceth the most minute things, by upholding and ordering the world. If this be true, as to a general Providence over the whole Earth, How is it much more clear as to a special Providence, respecting his own Children in their Pilgrimage and Warfare here below? even then that as it's said by our Saviour, *Luk 21. 18 One hair of his Disciples heads should not perish.*

Christian

Christian Experience confirms this Truth, That in the most mean Events, God's overruling Hand is greatly discover'd, and Prayers put up for small matters are return'd with such full discovery of him in the bringing them about, that the observation thereof afford greater inward Comfort in the enjoyment of the outward benefit ; were this more firmly rooted in the Hearts of professing Christians, we should have less talk of Fortune and Chance, and less Trust to Humane Endeavours, distinct from a Divine Influence.

Secondly, By the Observation of outward Providences, you may not only discover God therein, but even from thence be led to a Dependance upon, and a Trust to him, and that for matters of great moment, and also for your smallest concern on Earth, you will say with the *Psalmist*, *Thy right hand saved us* ; and as in the 6th verse, *I will therefore not trust in bow* ; and as in the 8th verse, *I will boast in God all the day long, and praise his name for ever*.

You wont with the Prophane, confine the acknowledgment of God ; your Address to him, and Reliance upon him to pinches of extremity, when Evils seem nigh at hand, forcing the Creature by the very light of Nature to cry out for help from God, or to desire those they have formerly mockt at as Religious, to supplicate Heaven to withhold the Evil,

Evil, or that God would have Mercy upon them in it.

You wont, with the meer Professor, express only your trust to God's over-ruling Providence in Words, censuring those that deny it, and yet live as without the sense of a God therein, by doing Evil privately, without considering his All-seeing Eye, or endeavour to obtain things desired in the use of ill means, without considering his over-ruling Power in the bringing forth of all Events.

You wont, with the lazy Christian, limit his governing-hand, but clearly know the extension of his Power towards all things, determining small Events in the lawful use of means, as well as greater; and that God's conduct of his Children in their small concerns, as much honours his condescending Goodness, as his regard of them in their most difficult concerns glorifies his Power and Godhead. The exact Observers of his special Providence, find as truly his Compassionate Care in answering their Requests for smaller things, as in the greatest concerns of their Life: Yea, that when matteas of small moment has been manag'd in the use of means, with Dependance and Resignation to him, they have then had both a better Event, than if the whole strength of humane Power and Policy had been trusted to, or ill means made use of for its obtaining: And that the honouring of God so faithfully in the diligent use of means, and true
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Reliance upon him for the Event of a small concern, has been encourag'd by God's laying a greater matter in their way, and greatly Honouring them therein.

It is therefore your Duty, to trust God in all circumstances, afflicting or smiling in your Souls, and in small as well as greater things that concern our Temporal State, and give up the least concern of your life to his conduct, address him for his Guidance in it, and depend upon him for the Events. This is to be recommended to all; To the Prophane, who mind not God in the goings forth of his Providence; and to the meer Professor, who acknowledge him in Word, but in Action deny his over-ruling Power; and even to the lazy Christian, who minds not God in matters of small concern, and gives not God the same Tribute of real Reliance for such things, as for matters of weighty concern; and this many times causes a slight and formal performance of our Duties to God, which is a dishonouring of God as truly as the more visible Sins of those who are Strangers to the Covenant.

Thirdly, By the observation of outward Providences, and of God therein, with a reliance upon him, you are in the way of obtaining a discovery of the inward workings of Christ's Spirit in the Soul, an enjoyment making you sensible of what formerly you could not give credit to, though exactly describ'd in his Word,
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and making you bless his Name, that he ever put it in your thoughts to practise that excellent and greatly neglected Duty of observation, that is, the promise of Christ, *To him that hath shall be given.* The conscientious regard of external Providences, will lead us to a discovery of greater things more marvellous in their nature, more dignifying our Souls, and more comfortably establishing our Faith in God's Word, than a Series of outward Events: The freeing of the Soul from the power of Original Corruption by the sweet dominion of Grace, the degrees of spiritual growth in the use of means appointed by God for that blessed end, will be of excellent advantage to encrease in the Soul light and joy, and establishment.

An Observer of such things is enabled to see good, where others discover nothing but evil; and evil, where others think all is good. He is arrived to the eminent degrees of those Christians, who in the 5th Chapter of the *Hebrews*, and the 14th, are said to be such, *who by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil*; who by habitual observation of God's ways by his Spirit and Providence concerning them, are enabled to see the design and end of Providence, not mistaking the merciful Methods of God's dealings with them as the effects of Anger, nor the trial of their Grace for a punishment for want of it, and thereby dishonour God, and sink under despondency; they can *rejoice in tribulation*, the blessed privilege

ledge of those who are in a state of favour with God, *Rom. 5.* and feel a power above themselves supporting them in all Troubles.

It is therefore to be lamented, That such instructing and comforting things are laid in our way to observe, and yet that so many with their Circumstances should pass without Record and Improvement. Though Christians are assured that God's Gifts are without Repentance; that they have the evidences of Grace in their Souls, and are kept stedfast in that Grace God has freely bestow'd: yet by their not observing God's Means working, and the proportion'd advancement of Grace to such Means, they are not so duly affected with the infinite Mercy of God, nor so comfortably sensible of his gracious dealings with them, nor so firmly establish'd in the hope that he will not cease his working in them, *till they are made mete for the inheritance of the Saints in light.* The observing-Christians have the privilege of the Angels, though in a lower degree, to see the Face of God, they have the enjoyment of Heaven by the assurance of it; they live in the exercise of Divine Love, Joy and Praise, which is the Life of Heaven.

I would from hence reprove those Professors, who by their neglect, coldness, and long intermissions from Holy Duties, are justly deprived of the sweetness of communion with God, and are apt to censure others who are more spiritual and heavenly in
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their Conversation, as phantastick and enthusiastical, an Instance whereof I had, by an Asperision of some Ministers upon the Writings of a Saint now triumphant in Heaven, whose Life was employ'd in Study, to understand God's Word, and the actings of Christ's Spirit in the Soul; by which Holy Care, and the Divine Favour, he obtain'd the precious Jewel of Assurance, and for many Years was possess'd of it.

The Asperision run against him as a thoughtful melancholy person; of the latter he had very little, but of the former much more, I do believe, than his Aspersers, and what was becoming the weight of the matter his thoughts run mostly upon, often bemoaning the trifling, superficial thoughts of the Christians of our Times concerning Gospel-Mysteries, Christianity experienc'd, our passage hence, and concerning another state in its certainty and eternity. The Asperision also run against him for laying stress upon enlargement in Prayer; and that concerning inward Religion his Discourses were unintelligible.

In answer to the first part of the Censure, I can from my own blessed Experience declare, That I have had the Promise verified to me of the Holy Spirit's helping our Infirmities, directing me in the things to be pray'd for, and inflaming my desires in the Duty, and strengthening my Faith in the power and love of God; and the Returns of my Prayers have been most
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convincing and comforting evidence, that God's Spirit was the Indicter of that Prayer of which God was the Fulfiller.

To the other part of the Censure, I shall only say, That the Communications of God to the Soul, are more convincingly felt than express: *The peace of God passes all understanding*; and the comfortable sense of it cannot be fully set forth by human Language, but the real enjoyment is far distant from Enthusiasm. The sincere Christian knows, that communion with God is a Heaven on earth, though some who have only Notional Divinity, think it's merely imagination without reality; our communion with God and Christ in the use of Divine Ordinances, is the best preservative from the Illusions of Satan, and the distempered Mind.

Having given Reproof, Let me advise all such, (who expose the high Attainments of Christianity experienc'd) to reflect upon their by-past life, if exactness of Observation of all past between God and their Souls, either as means, or the end, lie by them upon Record in their Diaries; and whether they have not rested upon the use of means as Duty, without observing and recording the Enjoyments therein, and their advancing-effects upon their Soul, and have not rested upon Evidences without ever observing by what means and method of God they were first made sensible of them,
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or had them further established. Has there never a step of outward Providence, round you, past your Observation, and search for God therein, or as a return to Prayer for that blessed end of crushing a Corruption, and exciting a Grace? In short, Has all the steps of God, in training you to the Sense of Conversion, and Graces after growth, been remarkt by you? If you can witness this, I am confident you have attain'd to the Experience of such things as will keep you off from Censuring others, and engage you to bear Seal to the Truth of what Christ bears sensibly on the Christian's Soul: but if upon Reflection, you have been out of this road, my Compassion is greatly towards you, even though you are Christians indeed; and that because of the great Comfort withheld from you, it being punishment enough to want the Comfort that strict Observers enjoy in this life: And generally there lodges at the bottom of such Censurers, either Ignorance of the same enjoyments from Heaven, an unwillingness to have any in greater esteem than your selves, or prejudices from their being of another Party, Opinion, or the like. All which I would greatly advise to serious observation of themselves, before their Censures be put forth against others; for my own part I have often found from some instructing and establishing passages, such amazing discovery of God and my self, that I have thought nothing more could be added thereto; but soon after I

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have had a further knowledge and establishment in the same thing, and that by another passage, caution enough to suppress disparagement of others, but from their example to bestir thy self more than ever in the use of Means, if a Soul therefore were to live Thousands of years on earth, it attains not to know so much; but upon strict observation in the continued use of Means, more and more Mysteries would be imparted. No wonder the Apostle's different Christians grown from others by a capacity of discerning good and evil, and that by the habitual use of observation, and experiencing God's ways with the Soul; if therefore you find others express what you have not felt, accuse not them, but censure your own neglect: especially, if upon the review of your life, you have not been acting with an exact observation and improvement of knowledge of God in his Word, outward Providences, and inward workings of his Spirit.

I think it not amiss to subjoin to this Reproof and Advice, an Experience concerning my self, and the very Saint thus reproached. I once being importuned to assist in a particular matter, a more than ordinary willingness to it seiz'd me; in the undertaking whereof a successful Issue occur'd, and great benefit to the person that importuned, whose Poverty and Goodness I had no discovery of, though greatly known to others, but was under a surprizing force to re-
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fuse their grateful Acknowledgment. And happening about an hour after to unboſom my ſelf to this Saint, amongſt other things I imparted this Paſſage, with a wondring at the meaning of ſuch a ſurprizing willingneſs to the action, and unwillingneſs to accept of reward, though Duty oblig'd me to it, when no other Motives to the contrary appear'd. To which he gravely answer'd, You ſhall receive it as a reward of this action ſixty-fold, by God's imparting himſelf to your Soul this day ; but be not concern'd, though a diſquiet follow it before you ſleep. This then, in my account, run like Prophecy, eſpecially after its fulfilling ; our Diſcourſe being about eleven in the forenoon : About two in the afternoon, in a Chamber all alone, ſuch enlargement of Soul, ſuch ſudden raviſhing, and heavenly affections, with an un-expreſſible delight ſeiz'd me, with amazement in my ſelf, to obſerve the firſt part of his Aſſertion made out : But about nine at night, there came a Penny-poſt Letter to my hands from one whoſe Malice prompts them with falſe Accuſations to aſperſe me, and that expreſs'd in ſuch bitterneſs, that it greatly did diſquiet me ; and going immediately with it to him, he with Modeſty and Concern repli'd, *That the Devil had been at the penning thereof.* His foreſight of theſe two ſuch different Effects conſequential to this action, was neither by Prophecy nor Revelation, but purely from his ſtrict and conſtant obſervation of God's ways round himſelf

in the like case, and though then it seemed strange to me, hardly being able to forbear from thinking of something prophetic in it ; yet since by observation I may say often or never falls out a voluntary lively Act of Charity without the least of self, and much of God in it, but great spirituality of frame has followed, and after this, one disquiet or other has fallen out ; yea often, I may say always as yet, at the time of this fellowship, an apprehension of some succeeding disquiet is in my thoughts.

Those that have reproach'd his Writings, would have been as ready to have reproach'd this Experience of him as Melancholy, unless they had been strict observers of God's ways with themselves.

I do believe that every Christian had not met my passage with the same return, and that none but those who by use are made discerning of good and evil, had been capable of what I find he was.

Be humbled therefore, lazy Christians, and think of others better than your selves, and not of your selves above what you are, by aspersing each other : You encourage those who know nothing of inward Religion, to keep out from trying its Enjoyments, and others to mock at Experimental Christianity. Alas ! Is so much of the depth of God's Ways to be known by years Observation, and this time
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made use of to rack Thoughts to explicate Events notionally, altho' the *Psalmist* himself found it too painful for him to explicate the inequality of Providence without God's Word; yet our Land abounds with such Deists, who, to destroy the Being or necessity of Revealed Religion, or of a Holy Spirit, as helps in the use of means, exalt Reason alone, and expunge all things incomprehensible by it, as Fancy or Chimera; as well as the Christian treated of; expunge Injoyments obtain'd beyond others, in a constant and close walking with God as Enthusiastical.

Some, I am apt to believe, affect this way of high Pretensions to Rationality, when at the same time they are greatly distant from its Exercise, either to obtain a Character of being Learn'd, or a liking in Society, by Rhetorical Conversation, or to draw Followers after their Notions, and they to appear as Prime thereof. You that have rational Souls, improve your Reason more for God's Service and your own Interest; the more Rational, the more capable of improvement with the blessed helps of God's Divine Word, Providence and Spirit: Place your Knowledge in Divine Things, upon his Word as the foundation, and learn to establish it by the observation of his Providence and Spirit confirming it to you; and then I dare say, there will need neither Rhetorick nor Division to keep up the Christian Religion in its Power amongst its Professors.

You are too weak to comprehend the Mysteries of the Gospel, put forth never such acuteness of Judgment, without the powerful Influences of Christ's Spirit opening the Eyes of your Understanding, and fixing your Faith therein by your Experiencing its Truth in your Souls, such clear knowledge and establishment appears, as resists all the fanciful and erroneous Notions of others; yea, such unspotted Conversations, as may engage others to your way, and to be Members of Christ's Mystical Body here on Earth. I have with great concern, known some Christians weak in Learning, but strong in the knowledge of Experimental Religion, clearly understanding an Event of Providence; yea, rejoicing in an Event outwardly afflicting, when a Learned Wit could neither comprehend the meaning of the one, nor free himself from disquiet under the other. How often may you hear some unacquainted with Experimental Religion, but greatly knowing in Notional Divinity, mightily applauding a Sermon, itching their Ears with a Rhetorical Style, and Philosophical arguing: And others, mean in Learning and worldly Reputation, but well acquainted with inward Religion, esteeming this same Sermon an empty noise, and the Preacher a feeder of his Flock with airy Notions, that have neither solidity nor comfort in their relish, and will lead them in no other Path than that of a meer Notional Knowledge, as a Bate to be catch'd by the Errors of this Age.

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If Ministers and People were more close to the use of means, whereby God's Truths might be Experimentally felt, both would see far less need of adjoyning the high flight of Notions in Pulpits, or in Conversation, for its establishment in their Souls. I think it in our day a more advantageous Sermon, and a more necessary Book, that leads Christians to the use of such means, by which much of God's Spirit may be communicated to their Souls, and thereby God's Word experienc'd as certain, and their Reliance upon it as the foundation of their Faith, evidently to themselves and others brought forth : Such I say, seem more necessary, than the Sermon or Book enlarging upon a Divine Truth, with such fine Oratorical and Philosophical Style, as may itch the Ear of the Christian with establishment of its own Notions in Religious Theory ; and of the illiterate, with an opinion of the Preacher or Writer's great and learned Gifts, indangering both, through obtain'd applause, not only of Pride, but of keeping Reason out of its due place ; and if this has not brought forth many unnecessary Heats at this day, I am greatly mistaken : Reason is that noble Principle distinguishing us from all other inferiour Creatures, and tho' Corrupted, yet capable of being restor'd to greater Perfection and Stability, than when Man was Created at first perfect, but capable of falling : God has made provision of suitable helps to advance, and to bring forth

this Perfection; but the Pride of Corrupted Man is such, that as at first it prompted him to affect an Equality with God; so now it prompts him to the vain imagination of himself, as sufficient without Divine helps to regain his perfect State, and obtain by his own knowledge the understanding of all necessary Divine Truths, and by his own strength the performance of all necessary Duties; And if this has not brought forth the undervaluing of Reveald Religion by the Deists, the undervaluing of Christ by the *Socinians*, and the undervaluing of a Divine Spirit exposing him as no help, neither his Spiritual Influences as strength to work out our Salvation by, I am as much mistaken.

Experimental Religion cuts off all these difficulties; For the more a Christian observes of himself in his experienced failures; the less room and lower station self-strength obtains in his Affections, the more he finds of Christ's Spirit unexpectedly and powerfully bearing home Scripture-Truths to his personal experience, formerly unacquainted with, tho' often Notionally heard of; the lower esteem Reason must have, as by its self incapable rightly to understand Gospel Mysteries: And tho' in our day, we have some so openly confident, as in Print to tell us, That nothing is Mysterious in the Gospel, against God's own Word, the Seals of Martyrdom, and against the Experience of all the Saints of the Earth, endeavouring thereby to act Factorship for Satan, by whose
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pleasing suggestion of Mans Reason and Strength in himself to be relied on, without any other help to believe or to do what is necessary for the obtaining Heaven hereafter, and a secure undisturb'd quiet of Mind here. I must believe, that that Creature has never yet been under any other discovery of Gospel-Truth, than what was the effect of notional Knowledge; and that continuing in the same State, he can hardly expect to be a Member of that Triumphant Society, whose Eternity will be taken up in the Admiration and the Praise of that Mysterious method of Redeeming Man from a state of Corruption and Misery, to a state of Perfection and Glory above; the prospect whereof we only now enjoy darkly through a Glass, and yet the views thereof that upon this Earth we sometimes experimentally have, are known by all Experiencing Christians, both to be Mysterious, far above Nature's foresight or enjoyment through it self, and rendring the Creature unexpressible astonishment in its approach upon the Soul; though the Protestant Nations abound with such Errors, yet they neither derogate from God and his Word, or afford darkness to Christian Professors, who have experienc'd the reality of both upon their Souls, but expose themselves to them as Christians certainly ignorant of God and his Word, whatever fine Notional Flourishes in Print or Discourse they express, and also draw forth Christians pity towards them, and help Believers to advance

vance their praising God, who has made them in the use of means to differ from others.

Experimental Religion makes us become as little Children, and esteem our selves so low as to lay all our depraved Faculties at God's Footstool, and using them not alone by way of Reliance, but with the help of God's Divine Spirit in the use of means: We have for many years enjoyed so much of the Gospel, but alas in Notion only, that I have stood in a maze to hear the Discourse of some illiterate People, concerning the Notions of Christianity; and to see their Zeal, debating their Preachers Notions with that heat, as if they had been throwing Fire-Balls one to another, till Fire has been kindled amongst Assemblies of Professors, when at the same time, experimental Religion has never been called in, as a help to unloose their difficulties. At the time of hearing some such differences, my own Experience in Christianity has made me discover, that either their Debates could be resolv'd in various Words; or that if means made use of by God, as helps to the People or Preachers Soul, for their experiencing of Divine Mysteries, had been more prest upon the People, with that enlargement which their own Experience might have afforded, no such Debates would have risen, and People and Preachers should be better known in our day; and whether God's Honour, the establishment of his Truth, self-applause, or outward Interest, were at the foundation of such hot Zeal. When

When once in the use of means, a Christian finds the evidences of Sanctification, he shall then make the current of his Zeal run towards further evidence of its reality and further growth in it, advising others not to debate whether Justification or Sanctification precede, whether certain Conditions must precede qualifying to be united to Christ, or union to Christ, before any thing of Holiness in our nature appear; but to walk in the use of God's means, and in them to obtain the application of Christ, and all his Priviledges, by the help of his blessed Spirit, and so both Conditions themselves, and a renew'd State by your Union to Christ may sensibly appear at the same time: By the observation of the means thus blessed, and the steps of advancement in this newness of Nature, is brought forth not only establishment to themselves, but a capacity of instructing and confirming others upon surer ground, than that of stretch of Wit and Notional Theory.

Our Debates concerning Free-Grace and Works, carry along with them too much of Self, and too little of Divine Experience, and I'm sure, too much of fiery Constitution; the experienc'd Christian finds enough in himself to keep both in their just Bounds, according to Scripture Rule; and imagines the Debates unnecessary, and bringing forth of no other Fruit, than that of Faction, Dishonouring God, and exposing Christianity as uncertain to those that are ignorant thereof. The Experiencing
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Christian finds that the more of the Free-Grace of God in Christ appear in his Experience, the more love to God is kindled in his Soul, the more of true Sanctified Love, the greater desire he finds to please and to obey him in all his preceptive Commands, and that his Experience of Free-Grace no ways tend to a Licentious Life: Whatever the Notional Knowledge of Free-Grace may do amongst those who know nothing of a real Faith, and experience of God's Grace in their Soul, and where unstrictness and unholiness of life appears in the greatest Zealot for Free Grace, it favours of nothing more than its Notion in their Brain. Again, the Experiencing Christian finds, that when he sets himself to be most diligent to perform Good Works and Religious Duties, yet in the first he is often overtaken with faults, and in the latter constant failures occur, wandering Thoughts therein, discomposure of Mind from some disquiet falling in before, or some suggestion from Satan, or corruption within, rising up at the time, which forces the Soul to lay by trust to Self-sufficiency, and to have recourse to the Free-Grace of God in Christ; that through his Divine Spirit, supplies may be conveyed, enabling of us to do Works, though our own, yet perform'd by Christ's supplies enabling of us; and accepted from us thorough his Merits perfuming them, that being our alone argument to obtain both, for the sake of the multitude of his tender Mercies, the opening
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and pouring forth of which we owe to our Blessed Redeemer, who has remov'd the flaming Sword, and given us access to the Throne of Free-Grace, but still in the use of the blessed mean of Prayer : And I think it more a Soul's concern, to try the Truth of access to the Throne of Grace by Prayer, in our own endeavour and observation, if return'd, (that being a mean of obtaining of Prayer in Christ's Strength) than before the trial of Prayer, to pursue first the Knowledge, whether Justification be previously necessary before access to this Grace, as is set down in the first *verse* of the fifth *chapter* of the *Romans*. Alas! While we are a striving which things go first, we are in danger of missing all ; while we are debating about the Notions of Religion, we suffer the Truths of God in their Experience to drop. Oh that our Debates were more at home with our inward Corruption, fighting it with the continued use of means capable by Christ's Strength meeting us in them, to overcome it, and to fructifie Grace in its room, and less with our fellow Christians, unless in point of strict and Holy Lives: Christianity needs no other bulwark from us, than the true plain meaning of Scripture-truth, and putting Souls in the use of such Means as God conveys the experience in ; and where the power of Christianity is felt, let him be Church of *England*, or Dissenter, under all its Subdivisions, he becomes the Object of my love, because of the Impres-
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sion the Divine Spirit seems to have stamp'd upon him. Of their being such, we may easily have discovery in discourse one with another, and that without any extraordinary gift of discerning. However others think of this Gospel-privilege, there is such a difference between the Nature of Notional and Experienc'd Christianity, between the way and words of a meer Notional Professor, though never so outwardly strict, and of an experiencing Christian, that to my self I find not the least difficulty : And it is greatly fuitable to the forecited Text in the *Hebrews*, where it is said, That it is the privilege of grown Christians to discern *good and evil*; and these Christians are such, who have grown thereto by use and experience. And where I can discover nothing of this, whatever Party he is of, let his Notions and Zeal in spreading them fly never so high, I am always afraid that the Motive of Self bears too much room in his witnessing for God and his Truth : Let all therefore be reprov'd, who set up Variance with those that bear Christ's Image upon their Hearts and Lives, and only differ in their Notions and Conceptions about the Truths of God. Let Holy Lives and Acquaintance in Conversation, with their experiencing Christianity in their Souls, be the Touchstone of trying and esteeming them. By the denying familiarity with such upon such differences, you pinch the great evidence of loving the Brethren, and shew to the world that such an one is laid aside,

aside, or introduc'd to your Favour, from having a name of being one of such a Party ; and so give occasion of producing Profelites in profession to such a Party to obtain interest, and encourage thereby others to ridicule Christianity because of such Professors blemishes, through the want of Christianity's power in their Souls ; though these inward enjoyments (into which observation of outward Providences lead as a mean) are incomprehensible by the prophane and meer Professor while in that state, yet they are outward passages greatly discovering God, bringing forth good where all evil is ominous, if observ'd by meer Professors.

It is experimentally known, that a passage of Providence dark and afflicting in its first approach, has many times had in its bosom a rich mercy. There is a known passage of one who broke his Leg in his Journey to go a Ship-board ; a dark and afflicting Providence, both by reason of his breaking his Leg, and the disappointment of his Voyage ; but in its bosom was that great mercy of saving his life, the Ship being lost in which he was to have gone. It is not long ago since a Wind hindring our Fleet to go forth was afflicting, but in it was that great mercy of the preventing of a *French* Invasion ; such passages the prophane and meer Professor cannot dive into, and if each were but observant of such like, they would be reckon'd by Millions round Nations and People, and all
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with a discovery of God, the Governor of all things, and would help us against repining for disappointments, and advance a reliance upon him in all things, by committing them to a Divine Conduct by Prayer, and diligently using means providentially laid in our ways.

Again, Is it not known with experimental Christians, that the Lord many times introduces a rich spiritual mercy by a dark Providence, a spiritual instruction for their establishment, by an afflicting Providence? It has oft been their experience to be brought under an outward disquiet on purpose to free them from a cold, lazy frame of mind, and to introduce a sweet heavenly posture of Soul, who therefore from continued observation of this experience, will not forbear repining, and exercise patience, till the discovery of God's design therein appears; yea, work together with him for the same end, by addressing the Lord for strength to stand firm in the exercise of reliance and love to him, which greatly establishes the Soul in the exercise of these Graces, and therein honours God, and is even met many times with a visible reward suited to that particular Action, tho' performed by his own Divine strength, the observation whereof has oft brought that Scripture to my thoughts, *Psal. 31. Great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men*; either by hiding them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man, or
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keeping them secretly from the strife of Tongues; and what establishment hereto the personal experience of an observing Christian would give, is more fit for filling up of sheets, than a few lines: *Mark the 10th Chapter, ver. 29. None has left house, &c. for my sake, but he shall even in this life receive an hundred fold, and eternal life in the world to come.*

Is it not the personal experience of Christians to be disappointed of the designed and desired issue of an endeavour to introduce the success of another and better? the constant observation whereof must needs bring the Soul to a greater measure of patience under a disappointment, to a sooner and better sight of the Providence than the other, who, though under his disappointment, is strengthened to rely by Divine influence perhaps in return to Prayer, petitioning strength to honour God therein, yet he must needs be under more sinking Fears, through the course of the passages of such disappointments; the other Christian having these supporting helps, the reflecting upon God's former ways of the same kind observ'd, and upon record; with the instructing and establishing effects such ways had then upon the Soul, and the better event brought forth in a way of Providence, than what was expected, together with Prayer put up, and strengthening supplies of grace received; however dark this may seem to the Notional Christian, yet this, I hope, will receive many Seals in its perusal by observing Christians.

Is it not the experience of Christians to be led into a pinch of extremity, on purpose to see the more of God, and the less of means in an event, and to stir up the greater reliance upon God with means, and the less upon means without his Divine Hand accompanying? How often are lawful, diligent using of means disappointed to Christians, till they be brought to serious and often Prayer for Heaven's conduct and blessing thereto? The observation whereof keeps the Soul safe between means, and a Divine Hand, affording each his due place, without presumption towards God, or Idolatry towards the other; if therefore the Christian Observer is enabled to discover good and evil, where others not so used thereto, are uncapable even in these more common Experiences; how far less capable are some Christians to discover more secret and adorable methods of God, observ'd by others? Either they were never experienced by them through the long intermissions of fellowship with God, or at least never observ'd, reflected upon, or improv'd by them to the end of further knowledge of God in the depth. There is therefore not only in the sight and enjoyment of spiritual things, a difference between Christians and meer Professors, but even between Christian and Christian, and that without either a Gift of Prophecy, or an extraordinary Gift of Discerning, but with such Gifts as are communicated to the Soul in the use of common means; only with this difference,

ference, that these means are more continually and in greater heavenliness perform'd, and the enjoyments of God therein, either for comfort or instruction more carefully remarkt in all its Circumstances, and laid up in record for this very end of improvement, the greater knowledge of Christianity, and of God's more extraordinary steps therein. Thou therefore, O Christian, that has necessary occasion of business, and of lawful diversion, greatly admixt with thy Religious Duties, as a mean of hindering such fellowship with God as those do enjoy, whose life does run in a stream of actual heavenly mindedness; reproach not, I say, these other Christians with melancholy Fancy or Enthusiasm, either of which bear their distinct marks from that knowledge of God obtain'd in the constant use of means, and by Divine fellowship therein, in continual and serious recesses of Soul with God; but bemoan your Circumstances thus involv'd in the necessary occasions of the world, when compar'd with some others, and do more with the opportunities you have, than ever yet you have done; and that according to the means treated of, and blessed by God to others.

In the hope therefore of passing from common Providences in your observation, to special ones round your self, yea, to the steps and workings of Christ's Spirit in your Soul, exactly correspondent to his Word, affording you such knowledge thereof, as expose the Contentionis

tions and Errors of the Earth to your Pity, and keep you safe from the discouraging Blemishes, and infectious Failures of Christians. In hope, I say, of this, let me press you to this great and experienced Duty of Observation, and I am hopeful your expectations will not fail, but a mysterious discovery of the reality of his Divine Word shall be unfolded, such as could never have been forethought, or foreseen by you.

It is not to be supposed that ever the most refin'd Wit on earth could have made up such a System of Mystery as is contained in the Scriptures, and is experimentally felt in the Soul. Is it supposable that the Wits of our Age (who pretend their Reason as their Guide) could foresee, contrive, or rightly comprehend the Work of Christ's Spirit in renewing the Soul? Or is it supposable, that the most rational man on earth, unacquainted with experimental Christianity, can imagine the work of Christ's Spirit in raising the Soul to a heavenly Frame, and the state of the Soul at that time? Is it imaginable, that by the will and power of man, such a Frame by which we are admitted to fellowship with the Godhead, can be retained without a Divine Influence? when though that this Divine Work is declar'd in the Scripture, yet with their reason and light of God's Word without Divine Spiritual influences, (obtain'd by God's common means) they are not able to comprehend it, and therefore is left unknown to some of them,
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and mockt at by others of them; yea, the Word of God made the occasion of Errors on earth, the prevention of all which comes in by the right and continued use of these means God commonly affords the sensible experience of himself according to his Divine Records.

Some Christians excel one another in Faith of Reliance hereby, that if there be no assurance going along, yet their Hope is without shock, and that in the use of Reflection upon former Experiences, which in the 5th chap. of the *Romans* and the 5th and 6th ver. is said, to *bring forth hope, that maketh not ashamed*; and certainly found to do so in the Experiences of such Christians, if their Seals were given forth to the World.

Let us imagine the judgment of any meer Professor under never so rational a Conviction of any one Scripture-truth, yet without the power of Christ's Spirit bearing it home as Truth upon the Soul, you will hardly see (as the certain effect of this) saving Faith therein, either commenced or so fixt, but that it may give way to a succeeding Error, if it have a fairer appearance to his rational Comprehension than the other. I don't therefore much wonder at the prophane or meer Professors, who have no other sense of Divine Things than what is Notionally imparted and comprehended by them: My greater admiration, is, That Christians indeed, who feel the certainty of what others have but heard of Notionally, and much

more than can be exprest by any, should not be more endeavouring the witnessing for God's Truth in Preaching, Printing, and Conversation; and less for the setting forth of their own Parts, or Notional Controversies, not so material in our day, where the Truth of God's Word is so much exposed and struck at.

A Third Motive to this Duty of Observation, is, That it is no hindrance to your worldly Business, or lawful Pleasures, but rather by fixing your Thoughts upon an adjutant to your ordinary means, even a Divine Hand, and Blessing, you may conform to his Will, and receive the reward of such a Duty: The Experience of Christians discover, that a laying aside anxiety of Mind, and hurry of Body, and a laying the matter before God, with the diligent use of means occuring in their way, obtains more business, better success, and greater Peace and Comfort, both in the way of obtaining it, and its after-enjoyment, than when they ey'd nothing else, besides natural Contrivances, which when mightily made use of, is apt to lead a Man beyond true sincere Uprightness, and their diligent lawful Industry, unless for some special end of cutting down a Corruption, or for some differences of the temper of the Mind: God's Method differs with the Soul; but whatever difference be in his Method, it will end in the same delight, easie endeavour, and discovery of Mystery. I add nothing more to this Motive, being it belongs
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also to the other means to be mentioned, which tho' commonly talkt of, yet not so Experimentally treated of, nor Practised in such a manner as bring in Knowledge of God and themselves, or afford that inward Comfort that might be attained thereby.

Let therefore your observation be general, as to all the steps of God's Providences round your Bodies and Soul, and you will see God in all, and may be brought to rely upon him for all, and have discovered such a Mysterious Work, as the implanting and growing of Grace in your Souls ; yea, you may be led to more than ordinary fellowship with the Godhead, with the discovery of such steps, as even other Christians have never been admitted to, or have let slip in their reflection and improvement of, and thereby be made more capable of witnessing for God than others, and better judges of meetness for Heaven than otherwise you should have been ; and all this, without hindering your lawful Business, but rather with less anxiety of Mind, and hurry of Body ; yea, with greater success, and more inward comfort, without confining you from Pleasure, unless it run to an extream, either of being Sin it self, or the occasion endangering you to Sin.

The Second mean you are desir'd to be in the use of, to bring you into the knowledge of Experimental Religion, and thereby the certainty of God's Word, and of his Ways with

the Soul against Errors abroad, and Darkness within, is that of Prayer.

In this very Duty did I first understand the meaning of Fellowship and Communion with God, of Divine Influences, Spiritual Emanations, spirituality and heavenliness of Frame, which are words mockt at by the Prophane in our days; and was unintelligible to my self, while only under the instruction and power of Education, and must be incomprehensible to all others, under the meer profession of Christianity, let their outward Behaviour be never so innocent, and their Duties never so gravely perform'd to the obtaining a name on Earth.

While I was under the power of Education, I seldom miss'd my set times of Prayer, with as grave a gesture as now at this day, and my concern us'd to be more for neglect of Prayer, than for not performing it aright; but after the Eying of God in all things, by the mean of observation of outward Providences, I began to think, that if I would have God's favour acting and shining in any passage concerning me, I ought to ask it, and in asking by Prayer, to do it with a real design and desire of obtaining it. First of all, I found a seriousness therein like unto the sincerity and unwanderings of one Man's speaking to another to obtain any favour; but soon after I was carried beyond this, with an awful Sense of the Majesty of God, who behov'd to be of great Might, to bring forth
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all Things, and to act in all Things, so visibly as I had observ'd, and with such height of sincerity and heavenliness of Mind, that my Thoughts darted upwards, as with Wings, the same time my Words were express; and that with such pleasure of Mind, as I had never observed before in Prayer; all my delight formerly having been, that I performed, and not mis'd my times of Prayer, but according to my usual time and way, had the satisfaction of doing it; and so from this went on as I have described in the Experiences concerning Prayer.

I know there are many prophane Creatures, whose Education perhaps has not been Religious, and so this Duty of Prayer has never been enforced upon them: They live without the sight of God in his common Providences, and therefore are the less mov'd to call upon him by Prayer for his favour in them, unless in a pinch of extremity, where, by the very light of Nature, and the power of their Conscience, they are forced to lift up a Petition to him, but perhaps without any apprehension of God at the time, or concern of seeing their request brought forth in a discovery of him in passages of Providence, bringing it about, or in a way of return to that Petition, their concern chiefly running upon the Deliverance, whatever way it come.

But alas there are others, amongst whom I was, and for whom I am now under great concern, and for whose sake I have so particularly

ticularly exprest the steps of going off from formality in Prayer to its spiritual and right performance; and from my Soul I wish, have, and shall beg of God, that what I am to say concerning Prayer, might influence their Minds with a sense of their State, and a desire to be out of it, in the right use of these few means; They are such, who have had Religious Education, who profess the Christian Religion even in a stricter way than others, who perform all outward acts of Worship with outward Gravity, who are free from known Vice; and still from no other Principle than either that of Parents instruction and example, fear of offending them, or of reproach from others, but void of inward seriousness of Mind in the Service of God; yea, in hearing Ministers or Christians express in Duty, or out of Duty, Communion with God, Divine Emanations, and the like, apprehend the Words without any inward sense of their meaning, and as little desire after it, or mock at such words, as too familiar and inconsistent with the greatness of that Majesty we approach unto in Prayer; not knowing experimentally the Mercy of God, as well as his Power; the Wisdom of God in expressing his own Mysterious Truths by Words inferiour to the Mysteries, but proportioned to our weakneses, as well as the condescending steps of God with a poor guilty Creature, in first planting Grace in the Soul; and I am confident, not knowing experimentally what a heavenly

heavenly frame in Prayer is ; for then when the Soul is in a ravishing spiritual posture, words of this kind are forc'd to drop from their Mouths, and there is more satisfaction in the Soul, and greater acceptance with God from a familiar style to him, influenc'd by his Divine Spirit, than from a whole Prayer of another, where distance appears, either from the words, fine style therein, or length of Prayer, but unspiritually perform'd : Yea, from this very principle of Education, there are some who have an outward sincerity, and from thence an inward satisfaction in their Profession, with a resting in their knowledge and practice, as all the Religion to be obtain'd, with good hopes of their state for Heaven, without ever doubting either their profession or security for Heaven. There are others under the power of Education alone, who tho' unspiritual in their Minds in Prayer, yet upon any failure of their set times, are really uneasie and dissatisfied, especially the breach of their continued custom.

And as it is for these my concern is greatly put forth, so it is with those that many times greatest difficulty is to reclaim. It is well known how deeply are fixt the Impressions of Education, and that nothing but a spiritual working of Christ's Spirit is able to blot them out, or to impress them a-new ; upon which very account, Childrens Education, with true Notions of the Christian Religion, can never enough pay their Obligation to such Instructors ; it
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being an excellent preparation for renewing the practical impressions of the same Notions upon their Hearts, as well as upon their Brains: In a word, Religion is between God and the Soul, and according to the heavenliness or unheavenliness of the Temper, and frame of the Soul; so a thought, word, or action, in Duties, or out of Duties, is either acceptable or unacceptable to God.

Before therefore you leave off the Errors of Education, to a right notion and performance of Prayer, you are first of all to be convinced of what is Erroneous, and then of what is True and Right.

- First, Therefore a laying too great a weight upon a particular place for the performance of Prayer, is an error of Education: I know there are some so strictly addicted to Prayer in a Church, that neither earliness nor lateness will obstruct their Custom herein, as if it were a circumstance material in God's account. It is not against Prayer in a Church that I set myself to oppose, but the great stress some from Education are pleas'd to lay upon it: I do believe, that if others were as painful to bring their Minds into a serious posture, as these are (by retrenching their natural Rest in a morning, retiring themselves from Diversion through a day, or at an evening) to have their Bodies in the Church at the times, Prayer would be better known, and much more pursued in its
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right performance, than at this day. For my own part, if my Soul be right with God, it is neither to House or Church I affix my self, but the place I can be most private in, either from the diverting sight of others, or their discomposing noise; and if I have opportunity of choice, no place is more grateful to me than that in which I have had greatest enjoyments of God in Prayer. Privacy I greatly value, from an unwillingness to expose my self to the Censure of Shew and Applause, or a Prayer acceptably performed to the mocking of some, finding it impossible to restrain my self from more than ordinary flood of words, and from a more than ordinary audible voice, when the L O R D is pleas'd to raise my affections above my ordinary frame. The reason of chusing a place favour'd with God's presence to my Soul, is, that the memorial thereof may excite the greater endeavour after it, and former Experiences may be one of my pleading Arguments for it. This is abundantly suitable to the example of *David*, who would often say, *Psal.* 42. 6. *That he remembered the hill Hermon-Misfar*, and other places, which were remarkable to him, from the rich entertainment of God's presence in them; from all which, I drive only thither, to make you know how little the consideration of Place, Prayer is performed in, avails in God's account, or comforts the Christian's Soul within, whatever customary performance, or outward applause afford.

Privacy

Privacy is recommended from Christ's own example, who would retire to the Fields on that very account ; yea, part then from his own Disciples, and constant Companions : And truly the more serious a Soul is, the more willing to be from all, and to center all his thoughts upon his dear God. If therefore any labour under this failure of Education, let me advise against it, unless on the account of better performance of Prayer ; and because I hope there are some who on this very account give strict example thereof, let me advise all from censuring such an Action ; the doing of it for a greater meetness, for fellowship with God in Prayer, makes it a Circumstance congruous to a well-perform'd Duty ; but the Circumstance of pleading for it in Conversation, and fixing it upon others, from a liking of the way, argues it rather an Error of Education, than a Circumstance experienc'd in themselves, helping forward their seriousness with God : for though to some it may have this advantage, yet to my self it could not have ; the seeing of any before or with me in any performance of private Prayer, proving many times visible hindrances.

Secondly, A laying too great weight upon punctual keeping of set-times to pray, is an Error of Education. There are many in no other state of Christianity, than that of its meer Profession, and outward Acts of Worship, who with marvellous strictness perform the set-times of Morning and Evening-Prayer, purely from
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the Rule of Education; but still at a loss what communion and fellowship with God in Prayer means: I accuse not their praying at set-times, but Professors confidence therein, as evidence of their religious state, or their Prayers right performance. *David's* set-times of Prayer are instanced in his Book of *Psalms*, and I hope there is not any experiencing Christian on earth at this day, who flights their appointed seasons of private Prayer, to supplicate the Lord's conduct from morning till night, and from evening to morning; yea, by observation of continued Mercies through the day, are kept in a posture of Soul fitted to ejaculate Praise; and by observation of continual Wants, fitted to ejaculate Supplication throughout the whole course of the day, and so kept in obedience to that Divine Command, of *praying without ceasing*, even amidst diligent endeavours in business, and outward lawful pleasures, as well as in the performance of morning, noon, and evening Sacrifices. My Challenge therefore takes place, when exactness in that Circumstance proceeds from no other foundation than that of Education, or guided by no other Rule than that of others Example, and tending towards no other ends than Applause, or pleasing themselves by their Customariness therein. The former experience of my self under the alone power of Education, and now under the power of Christianity, gave me occasion to reprehend this Error, having then found my self more uneasy
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at the neglect of a set-time of Prayer than I am at this day, when a lawful occurrence falls in my way to hinder my performance of Prayer at my usual set-time, then I have found my self still under anxiety for the omission only ; but blessed be the Lord, my experience is such, that a heavenly Frame (the continual desire of my Soul) is neither confin'd to set-words, nor set-times of Prayer, and follow'd with as evident returns when put forth in Ejaculation, as when in Solemn Prayer.

Thirdly, A laying too great a weight upon the performance of Prayer in form, or extemporary, is an Error of Education ; the frame and posture of the Soul in Prayer, is the touch-stone of its right performance, and therefore either of which the Christian finds most raising a spiritual frame, that I think safest for a Christian to stick to.

For my own part, without regard to the opinion and way either of the Church of *England*, or Dissenter, but purely to personal experience, founded I hope upon Scripture-Revelation, I must say, that when in Closet or Family-Prayer, my frame of mind has been rais'd to great spirituality and heavenliness, my words then have run from me with an amazing freedom and current, and in a most affecting way to my self and others ; from whence I must imagine, that the Soul confining himself to words in a form of Prayer, gives an occasional hindrance

hindrance of this spiritual frame, by confinement to what is design'd to be utter'd, and so keeping off such Divine Influences, which we are incapable of bounding either in the frame of the Soul, or in the Christian's outward expression.

Again, There is a mighty difference between a Christian's seriousness, when nothing else is sensibly productive thereof, but the strength of the Creature's self, by the means either of thinking upon God's All seeing Eye, upon the greatness of the Majesty approach'd to, or by the means of drawing off the thoughts from distracting things : There is vast difference, I say, between this serious frame, and a spiritual heavenly frame sensibly, suddenly, and powerfully influencing the Soul without any thing of Self, unless as in the use of Prayer, but sensibly rais'd from a higher hand, to thoughts and words far beyond the other. I bless the Lord without the latter I am never satisfi'd; and I know the first may be perform'd, and yet without sensible fellowship with God, but perhaps real fellowship with him by his strengthening influences, and nothing more, fixes the thoughts from diversion, or discovers Self, and Christ's spiritual Influences; and carries the Soul more out of Self, to cry and depend on Christ's Supplies, than such extemporary Prayer with observation. But if this Experience can be opposed by others, who, for any thing I know, may find less distraction, and greater heavenliness of frame in a form'd Prayer, whatever their opinion be, I shall never

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offer

offer my Censure against the Circumstance of formed or extemporary Prayer, being only to be accused, when either it's perform'd, stuck to, and pleaded for, because of Education, and not by reason of the one or the other's being a better mean towards performing of Prayer in a more heavenly and spiritual manner; if our Concern run more upon the observation of the Soul's frame in the performance of Duties, than upon the various methods of their outward performance, the common distinction of opinions and quarrellings about needless Circumstances would soon be abandon'd. I dissent from all, tho' of my own opinion, who lay weight upon any Circumstance, but in so far as it contributes to greater spirituality in Prayer; and shall never censure those of another opinion, who stick fast to some Circumstances, and thereby differ from me, purely because such Circumstances are more serviceable to their Souls, in raising their frames to greater spirituality than when otherwise perform'd: But to be strict in their use, and to plead for them in conversation, purely because of being educated with them, without trying the contrary way, pleaded for, and experienc'd by others, seems to me the product of Self, rather than the Spirit of God.

Again, I am of the opinion, that Children educated with Forms of Prayer, are led to greater laziness in their more grown years, and often proves a mean of rendring them secure without fellowship with God in Duties: Not as if I
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confin'd God's spiritual Influences to an extemporary Prayer, or that there were never a spiritual frame in praying with Form; but that the latter more confines the Soul with its thoughts in the Duty, and so fits the Soul far less to receive spiritual breathings, than an extemporary Prayer. And when a Soul in the use of Form in Prayer is raised by Christ's Spirit to a heavenly frame, I think I may say, that then the Soul goes beyond the path of Form it begun the Prayer in, and reaches further in expression, than what his Soul design'd by his usual Form.

Fourthly, A laying too great a weight upon the Circumstance of Length in Prayer, is another Error of Education, especially amongst the Youth of Dissenters, who are as much pleas'd herewith, as those of the Church of *England* are with Form in Prayer. Length in Prayer I accuse not absolutely; for if the Soul be in a heavenly frame, and admitted to near approach to God in Prayer, its delight therein is such, that it is unwilling to, yea, can hardly give over; but when Length in Prayer proceeds from no other foundation than Education or Custom, it is a Circumstance no ways promoting the Soul's heavenliness in it, or God's acceptance of it. There are many, who from being train'd up in the way of extemporary Prayer, can with strength of memory, judgment, and readiness of expression, lengthen out Prayer to their own

conceit and satisfaction, and with applause from others, and yet never know at the same time the meaning of access to God in Prayer; it is a Consideration that has often moved me to concern for some under good Education, and religious Character, but altogether unacquainted with inward Religion. The meaning of outward Worship to God, is to honour him on earth amongst our selves; and the service that is proportion'd to God, is spiritual in the Soul; expression being no acceptable Sacrifice to him, unless upon that account of spiritual Worship; it's that which assimilates a man most to God, and brings a man sooner to the knowledge and admiration of God, and to a meetness for that Heaven wherein all his Childrens Servants shall be spiritual and heavenly. A Prayer spiritually perform'd, seems to fly with wings by the gale of Christ's Spirit blowing upon the Soul, making it sail towards God with such words and thoughts as appear more the fruit of a Divine Spirit, than of great memory and judgment. Let us but make observation of one man's Prayer at one time and another, when the judgment and memory are left only at the helm, how coldly and faintly does his words drop, though never so fine; but when God breathes suddenly and freely upon the Soul, his frame is visibly chang'd, is more affecting to the hearer, and is admitted to plead with God in greater familiarity, with greater power, and readier expression. It is experimentally known
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how much more pleasing and affecting a spiritual Prayer is, though perform'd by an illiterate hand, than the Prayer perform'd by the most ingenious but unspiritual. There needs no other way to converse with the experienced Christians, but by bringing Experiences to their memories; but for others unacquainted with experimental Christianity, I hope the use of the means treated of, will bring you to the same Experience, and then your arguings upon Air will vanish, and they'll find the Christian Religion solid and true, and filled with all solid comfort and establishment to your Souls.

Abandon therefore Circumstantial Niceties as evidential of your right-perform'd Prayer, restrict your self to no place, in performing the Duty, or in debating concerning Prayer, but where you find most privacy, and greatest assistance towards a good frame of Soul; confine your self not to morning or evening Prayer only, but throughout the whole day, upon any occurrence of affair, or company you are call'd to, distrust your self, without begging God's conduct therein; and if under constraint from Set-Prayer, endeavour after a good frame of mind in ejaculating a Petition to God, which will issue in as sweet and remarkable a return, by which means the frame of your mind is kept in a continual seriousness to answer that Command of *praying without ceasing*, as was said before, and as a mean to repel forgetfulness of God. And

to hinder the danger of running to an extreme in lawful diversion, which at this day is an occasion leading to much evil, even amongst real Christians, lengthen out your Prayer according to your Suits you find you stand in need of, or are sensible of at the time; and if you are heavenly, you will lengthen it out with pleasure; use form or extemporari-ness; not because you have been so educated, or because those of your Party do, and plead for it, but try both, and then use what you find most serviceable towards a good frame of Soul.

These Errors being remov'd, I come to give you my Experience of right perform'd Prayer; not by Philosophical Definition or Distinctions, there being sufficiency thereof by excellent hands already in Print, but by Enlargement, according to my method of experiencing the gradual steps of knowledge God was pleas'd to afford concerning Prayer in the performance and continuance of it. In general therefore, judge of your right performance in Prayer by the following marks, which were the two I was first of all made sensible of, tho' afterward others (of which you shall hear in the repetition of the same two, with the addition of others) occur'd: But I chose rather to keep them in the method of time as well as matter that they were experienced in; not so much for grown Christians who have experienced the same with my self, and therefore

therefore may be comfortably established thereby ; but for the sake of the illiterate and meer Professors, though notionally learned, that they, and all unacquainted with Experience, may be led step by step to the right knowledge and performance thereof.

First, You may judge of your right performance of Prayer by the frame of your mind in it, if spiritual and heavenly, if your thoughts are carri'd upwards with sincerity and fervency, the same time your words pass your lips ; the power of Instruction, Custom or Applause having small room as Motives thereto ; but the obedience of God's Command, the sense of your need of, and insufficiency to bring about what you ask. The sense of power in God, and of his willingness to bestow, if for your good, moving you to address him, after the experience whereof, and strict continuance in the use of set and ejaculatory Prayer, with observation of what occurs therein, you will find more knowledge and enjoyment creep upon you, than all the Divines on earth that ever I have met with has been able to express or impart.

Secondly, You may judge of your right and acceptable performance, by returns to your Prayers. Such objections, that a return may come to a Prayer, and the Christian not know it to be the return ; or that a return may be so long

deferr'd, as when it comes in, the Prayer that Petition'd it being out of the Christians Thoughts, he is in danger of mistake, by imagining the Prayers not being spiritually perform'd, not accepted of God, or return'd by him, when the Prayer has been perform'd aright, God pleas'd with it, and yet answer'd: Such Objections shall fully be answer'd in further discoursing concerning Prayer: Only give me leave to say, that when a return comes to a Prayer, and the return not known to be such, it is certain argument to me, of laziness in that Christian, and that a general and exact observation of the Enjoyments accompanying spiritual and continued Prayer, has not been the practice of that Soul, and that that Prayer has not at first been remarkt; God's ways between the Praying, and its return, not exactly observ'd, and reflected upon, and consequently the return given in, not compar'd, but unsuitably applied to notion and fancy; the neglect of the observation of this, God's common method, extremely hinders the knowledge of a Prayer right perform'd, and really return'd, and is the true and often occasion of false and erroneous Thoughts both of God and our selves:

Again, It has often been my own Experience, when the return of a Prayer has been to be referr'd, that at the time of the performance I have had an actual powerful sense of God's acceptance thereof, hoping it was God's work, and not my own, from its sudden and powerful
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fixedness in my Soul ; neither the work of Satan or inward Corruption, by reason of its effect in the Soul afterward abiding, even full pleasedness and quiet of Mind concerning the Event, tho' the return was deferred ; neither any repine, but continued exercise of Resignation, Love to, and Reliance upon God, which clearly discovers the power of a Divine Spirit ; these going along takes off the Thoughts of Prayers being unspiritual, unacceptable, or not to be return'd, tho' the return be deferr'd.

There are many at this day under no other advancement in Christianity than its meer Profession, who are constant to their Duty of Prayer ; but either reflect not, or in reflecting upon their Duty perform'd, never seriously question in themselves, whither any other thing than the repetition of words in such serious a manner as the strength of Education, and others discourse concerning God's greatness, had brought them to, was either necessary or actually in their Prayers, or ever examin'd after Prayer was over, whether it had return or not ; How this way of living should train a Soul to the experience and knowledge of access to, and enjoyments with God in Prayer, I know not, speaking as to God's common way of bestowing such comfortable privileges purchased by Christ for us.

To instruct you therefore, (from the Experience of God with my self) O prophane and meer professing Christians, I would with much sincerity and love to your selves, beg your steps in the following method.

When

When you are designing any matter, or endeavouring the interest of this or the other mean, to bring forth your purposed end, resolve to address the Lord by Prayer for his guidance of you to the use of right means, and his blessing the means to bring about your design, unless inconsistent with his Honour and your Interest; And if you are hinder'd from solemn Address, make use of your Thoughts, and dart them up to him with the same Petitions: Mind not only the words in your solemn Prayer, and your thoughts in Ejaculation, but consider the frame of your Mind in both, whether serious or not; if as serious, as when speaking to this or the other help to carry on your design, (at your first entrance I suppose not your acquaintance with spirituality of frame) and if your frame be thus serious, mind the issue of your affair; if it be according to your Desire and Prayer, impute not your success altogether to your outward help of this mean, and the other, but let Heaven's Blessing, accompanying your diligent use of means, have room in your Thoughts, if not as chief, yet as necessary; and therefore you will improve this passage thus observ'd, with a resolution to address God more seriously than ever, in your next undertaking; and accordingly perform your serious Prayer to him for his Divine Assistance, which meeting with a sensible return, you will improve with a more fixedness in your resolution to Petition him in all your after-concerns,

concerns, and with giving of him now the place of principal Agent with your means, which will lay a foundation, not only for a resolution and performance of Prayer, and that seriously to God in all Occurrences, but make a fair step towards the founding a Faith of Reliance upon God; yea, an endeavour of pleasing God, to interest your selves in his favour, and a perusal of the Scriptures, to know the Will of God, and the way of doing it; and going on in this way of Prayer and Observation, with such suitable improvement, you know not, neither is it in the power of the greatest exercise of a rational Soul, to foresee or imagin beforehand, what great and mysterious things may be laid before you to observe; to wit, of a Christian's advancement from the first step of Seriousness, to a Reliance upon God as the alone power to be trusted to, with such means he allows of, and has witnessed his pleasure in, by working with them for the bringing about such Events as are sought from natural strength by others, but by them in Petitioning the Agency of his Power: I don't mean by repeating of Words, by way of Form and Rule given you in your Education, but thorough a sense of the great advantage of his favour, and a sincere desire to obtain it; a carrying out of your desire with thoughts and words suitable to the present height of your longings, which lays you in the way of meeting with the breathings of Christ's Spirit

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to help your infirmities, and to raise your frame to such a posture of heavenliness as you never knew before, unless by the hearing of the ear, and will soon unfold what a dark state you have been in; that all the seriousness you had in Prayer, was no other than the strength of education, and that there is something else in the Christian Religion you have never yet been sensible of, more suitable to the feeling of the Soul, than to the utterance of the greatest Orator on earth. The Spirit of God has express'd in the Scriptures these Mysteries in a stile suited to our understanding; but when the same Spirit bears them home to the sensible feeling of a Christian, what addition is given to the Christian's understanding of them, and true Faith in them! I go not therefore about to express these experienced Mysteries in a better stile for your understanding, but to put you in a way of obtaining their experience upon your Souls, by the working of a Divine Spirit in the use of common means. You lose your labour in endeavouring to understand them in their saving efficacy by your natural reason, without the help of a Divine Spirit, and his internal Revelation. What can better unfold or express the breathings of Christ's Spirit upon a Soul in its holy frame and performance of any Religious Duty, than its resemblance to the blowing of the wind upon our Bodies, which, though sensibly felt, yet is mysterious as to the parts of the Heavens from whence it blows, or the way of its

its blowing upon us. In like manner, though the Spirit of God, breathing upon a Soul in praying to God, comes often suddenly like a gale of wind, refreshing the Soul's dead frame with a ravishing heavenly life and power; thoughts, desires, and all the affections being then carri'd heavenward, like a Ship towards its Harbour, with sweet delight therein, and an actual undervaluing of the richest treasures and pleasures on earth, in the balance with this comfortable sweetness for the time enjoy'd, the continuance whereof would afford the Soul a Heaven on earth; yet the Spirit of God, in the excellency of his Divine Nature, and in his method of thus changing the frame of the Soul, is incomprehensible by the reach of human reason; and to the experienc'd Soul there is but a discovery of him in his blessed effects and operations, and a sight of him through a Glass darkly, till that blessed change pass upon them, and they obtain a perfect meetness to see and to understand him as he is.

No wonder therefore the prophane, or meer professing Christian, attempting to comprehend God's Word as to the work of the Spirit of God in planting Grace, or watering it with constant influences to keep it in exercise, find themselves at a loss how to understand it; and therefore never feeling its effects upon their Souls, either look upon it as *Chimæra*, and the Being of the Spirit of God, or his blessed operations

rations of converting and spiritualizing a Soul; to be only Notions of a melancholy Brain. How many are there at this day who mock at the Spirit of God, and the Divinity of our Blessed Redeemer, and ridicule expressions of fellowship with him as canting discourse; for they never receiv'd the precious benefits which the Son of God purchas'd, and the Spirit applies to the Souls of unfeigned Believers. Is it possible that one in a violent hot Countrey unacquainted with the blowing of Wind? Is it possible that one that never tasted Honey? Is it possible, I say, that the first and latter, from the description either of the blowing of the Wind; or of the nature of Honey, in the most perspicuous words, can so well understand, or so firmly believe the blowing and refreshing effects of the Wind, or the nature and the sweetness of the Honey, as those who have enjoy'd of the first, and tasted of the latter? This is a true resemblance of their condition, who are void of the real inward knowledge of Religion; and their slighting and disbelief of the spiritual efficacy of the Ordinances, cannot weaken the Faith of Believers, who have experienced the reality thereof upon their Souls; but give them greater establishment, and afford them matter of repeated exercise of love to him, who past by some, and calls others, and advances them to a further reliance upon him, in the due use of means, for the obtaining a richer abundance of the communications of the Holy Spirit,

Spirit. When the Errors of the prophane and meerly professing Christians endanger the staggering of any real and true Christian, it is often my fear least that Christian has been too careless of his Duties, and has not improved the pure motions and assistance of the Spirit within, and the advantage of the external means of Grace; for else he would be above the impression of the objections of carnal persons against his own feeling. Is it possible that force of the most powerful Argument of the greatest Rationalist, covered with the finest drefs of words against the sweetness of Honey, can shake the Faith of any one that has tasted thereof? perhaps he cannot discover the Sophistry of the Allegation, but he knows it's false; like the poor Woman, when oppos'd by the enemies of Truth, her Faith was firm in her Saviour, and she answered all Arguments with these words, *I cannot dispute for Christ, but I can die for him.* A sincere Christian can say, I cannot perhaps demonstrate with rational arguing, the Being of the Spirit of God, and his effects of renewing the Soul, conforming it to Christ's Image, and spiritualizing its frame in Duties, but I am well assured of it against all the Infidels on earth. Let what I have said move thee, O prophane and meer professing Christian, to the use of observation and right performance of Prayer, as helps by which you may experience the reality of inward Christian Religion; yea, let it move you,
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O lazy Christian, who know not so much of God in the Soul, and of inward Religion, as is attainable by you, be more serious and constant in converse with God, in the use of his means, that you may enjoy what others have been acquainted with : The wise and serious observer of God's dealings with his Soul, who frequently reflects upon them, will better understand the harmonious agreement between the revelation of God in the Scripture, the workings of the Holy Spirit, and the divine disposals of things in this low life, than another sincere Christian who does not acquaint himself so intimately with God, by a constant application of himself to him in all the ways wherein he draws near to us. It is the hand of the diligent, in the use of means, that makes rich ; so is it the mind of the diligent Christian, in the use of means, that is fill'd with knowledge. God's private Councils are not to be div'd into, but what is suitable to his Word is to be sought after, and may be found out. It's the trial of his Word that brings Experience, and Experience brings hope ; and it is the not trying the Truths of God, that makes so many doubtings and shakings in a Christian's Faith, and so much of unsettled hope of their inheritance above.

I return from the lazy Christian again, to the meer Professor and Prophane, and beg you'd be entreated to join the easy and advantageous Duty of Prayer to all your endeavours,
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not contenting your selves with the cold forms of words, but mixing holy affections, which are the life of Prayer, and observing the gracious return of Prayer, when perform'd by the assistance of the Spirit of Grace. This is a Privilege provided for you, and to be obtain'd by you in the use, and continued use of right means; the reason you miss the Divine Bounty is, because you don't present your self in God's way. If a Beggar expects the Alms of a Prince, he will endeavour to be in the same street he passes thorough, and as near him as ever is possible; he will neither go to a contrary street, nor to the opposite side of the same street; neither will he plead his Poverty alone, but express all his Wants one after another, as so many Motives to move charitable Compassion. All Beggars keep not to the same form of words, but open their Cries differently, according to the different Sore, Lameness, Blindness, or the like, wherewithal they are afflicted sensibly with. Prayer is God's way wherein a poor Creature may draw near to him without hindrance of this or the other diversion between his Soul and his King; and when a Christian is once sensible of his Wants, and of the All-sufficiency and Condescension that is in God, it is not Form or fine words, but fervent serious pouring out the desires, that moves the compassionate Father in Christ. A Closet-Prayer is oftentimes the opportunity of receiving great mercies from God, and is many
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times the settling of a disquieted mind, and the change of a carnal earthly frame, to a spiritual heavenly one. It allays our Sorrows, and gives peace under sharp Afflictions. This Duty spiritually and constantly perform'd, will make you happy by Experience, and to resolve with the Psalmist, *It's good for me to draw near to God.*

But to discourse more particularly concerning Prayer spiritually perform'd, be pleas'd to remember the many Experiences in the forepart of this Discourse, concerning spirituality in Prayer, as evidential of its right performance; yea, God's acceptance thereof, and of God's returning what was askt therein. I hope with an humble rejoicing I may say, that since ever I begun to experience a real heavenly frame in Prayer, when my Soul therein has been carri'd forth to God with high spirituality concerning any one particular Event, with full quiet of mind, and sensible exercise of resignation at the time concerning it, a return to that Address has never as yet failed me; and that when my desire has been in exercise towards any one thing that God would not bestow, I found my self by the strictest observation under a constraint from this spiritual frame; yea, sometimes from words to utter any Petition: or when words have been utter'd, it has been in the same manner as when I was altogether unacquainted with inward Religion.

These and other Experiences are built upon no slenderer a foundation than God's own
Word

Word in *Psal.* 10. 17. according to the expression of the Psalmist, *Thou wilt prepare their heart*, to wit, the hearts of the humble, and of God's own Children, and *thou wilt cause thine ear to hear*.

Is there any thing more plain or more fully experienc'd by observing Christians, than that when God enclines his Ear to hear a Petition from a Child of his own, that he prepares his heart aforehand to ask it. He prepares the heart to ask by the influence of his Divine Spirit, one part of whose work is said to be to *help our infirmities*, and that infirmity of our not knowing what or how to ask, by making intercession with us in Prayer for what God is to return, as well as exciting us to ask what we should not have otherways done, though really standing in need thereof. As the spirit of a man knows the things of a man, so the Spirit of God knows the mind of God; and is it to be imagin'd that this Spirit knowing the mind of God concerning what he will return, will raise a Christian's Soul to a heavenliness of frame, and thereby prepare his heart to ask of God for an Event, when he knows God will not return it? A spiritual heavenly frame is not the fruit of Self-power, otherwise a Christian would be capable of getting and retaining it when and as long as he pleas'd, which from its sweetness in enjoyment would be desir'd for ever; but it is the certain operation of the Divine Spirit influencing

fluencing a Christian's Soul commonly in the use of means, and extraordinarily without means, for the end of letting the Soul experience the sweetness of nearness of fellowship with, and access to God in Prayer, as a foretaste and earnest of more intimate and lasting communion with him in Heaven; and for the end of helping him to pray in such a manner as may be acceptable to God, and return'd by him. It is as, yea more, insupposable that the Spirit of God would help the Soul to plead with God for a thing contrary to his secret Will, (not a Secret to him) as to help him to ask any thing contrary to his revealed Word and Will, where his assistance is given to ask, it is assuredly for the obtaining of what he knows God will bestow; however the return be deferred, and and Christians lose its sight by the intermission of observing of passages between the addressing God, and God's giving in a return thereto.

Preparation to ask of God in Prayer, obtain'd through the sensible comforting Influences of his Divine Spirit, and preparations to petition the Lord, obtain'd without any other sensible help than outward endeavour in the use of means, are easily distinguished in their present sense, and after-effects; the one is sensibly the intercession of a Divine Spirit, with the blessed effect of inward delight, resignation of mind, and return to the Prayer; the other has nothing else apparent besides the Creature's own strength, without that inward comfort or re-
turn

turn following it, but the latter is often the means of obtaining the first. I have often found, and to be sure other observing Christians the same, that when I have design'd and desir'd to lay a Petition before God in as serious a manner as possibly I could, my preparatory means has been to bring my Mind in composure, and my Body in gravity of gesture; to read a Scripture again and again, to fix my Thoughts with seriousness, and to meditate upon the All-seeing Eye of God, to whom I was to address, on purpose to over-awe me from levity of mind in my Prayer: But when I have been actually engag'd in the Prayer thus prepared for, the desir'd and design'd petition has never been mention'd; either my Thoughts have been carry'd upon somewhat else undesign'd, which I have with earnest affections and submission prayed for, and has sensibly had it afterward return'd; or if the desir'd and design'd petition has been express'd, it has been in such a manner, tho' sincere and unfeign'd; yet sensibly a Prayer perform'd with Self preparation, and greatly wanting heavenly supplies to enliven and spiritualize it; and as spiritual and heavenly strength preparing to ask was withheld, so was the return: Yea, besides the experience of correspondency, of heavenliness of frame in Prayer, the true comforting preparation of Christ's Spirit to that Prayer's return, I hope I may sincerely witness that in the enjoyment of such a heavenly frame in Prayer, words of Praise

concerning the thing I design'd to petition for, without the least fore-knowledge of the mercy obtain'd, has been given in. Who observes not these things at the time, and lays them not up in their Diary till the Explicatory passage appear, such lose the comfort of such enjoyments; the Knowledge of God's deep ways, and their Capacity of witnessing for him as others.

Some real sincere Christians may here perhaps advise, and wisely too, to have a care lest by God's changing this method, observ'd as certain, the ill consequence of darkness and Faith's staggering occur not, leading to mis-doubt both former experiences, and the new methods of experience God gives in.

To which, I say, that any mistake concerning the Spirit of Christ interceding for any one thing in Prayer, and the return thereof as certain, is not because that ever it otherways has been, or shall fall out; God's word being true, and the certain Foundation of this experience, but by reason of some failure on the Christian's part thorough laziness in observation.

Again; This Objection is evidence to me, that thou, O Christian, art not in the way of Observation, otherwise thou wouldest have known from experience God's infinite condescension to be such as to suit his Dispensations according to the State of the Soul in its Conversion, and in its progress in Christianity. To a new Convert the experiences of God are so marvellous and plain, either in their Nature, or by
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God's continuing to repeat them, till the Christian understands them plainly. If he apprehend not one, he may others; if he cannot see somewhat of a Divine Power in a common serious frame brought forth by the Soul's own strength, and sincere endeavour; yet he may in a rais'd, ravishing, heavenly, delightful frame, coming suddenly, and that again and again, with returns to the latter, and not to the first; that the one may be the more distinguish'd from the other, and the ardently sought after. The Leper weak in Faith had his Prayer immediately return'd; but the Woman in *Canaan* great in Faith had the return of her petition deferred, with the intermixture of many trying passages. Thus by Observation of God's ways with my self, I have found that my Prayers sincerely perform'd, when first sensible of an inward change, were immediately return'd; that I had not time to lose sight of God and his condescending love in them: But so soon as the Faith of the certainty of access to God in Prayer, was established in me, and Faith of reliance upon him was stronger, then his returns of such Prayers were greatly defer'd: And as a condescending help to prevent desponding anxiety, quiet of mind concerning the return to be defer'd, always accompanied my supplication, and the Lord left me not to the Dominion of corrupt nature, or of Satan's suggestion: Or if either had assaulted me, the Divine strength raising me to an actual resignation to his Will at the time, fortified me against them.

Again; An Observing Christian sees so much of the depth of Wisdom in God's ways concerning them, that it must be strange if he presum'd to confine God to one method, when the variousness, yea the contrariness of methods to bring about the same end, is one great evidence of the Excellency of his Wisdom. An observing Believer knows, that God tries the strength of Christians various ways in order to their Establishment: Not because he is ignorant of the exact measure of their growth in Christianity, but from love to them; that by their faithful continuance in Prayer deferr'd as to its return, the Graces of the Spirit may be excited, and exercised, both to the honour of God, and their inward Comfort: For what can be more reviving than to find corruptions weaken'd, and grace strengthened, which is the sweet issue of many grievous afflictions, that are not removed upon our renewed Petitions, till we are purified by them.

Hereafter may some say, Since spirituality in Prayer is the Spirit of God's gift, and it unexpectedly comes, we may lay by Prayer with our own Endeavours, and wait as the *Quakers* say, till the Spirit move, and then to Pray. To this I say, Spirituality in Prayer is the alone Gift of Christ's Spirit, and it comes when he pleases; but by sincere Prayer, we obtain this blessed Gift: It is not the usual way of God to bestow it in more excellent degrees, without our sincere asking it in the humble sense of

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our need of it. The *Quakers* acknowledge, as from converse with some of them I have heard, they have an innate Spirit, by which they are acted, and according to its inward striving, so they move in Duties. I know in us all there is that innate Principle of Corruption, which reigning, makes our faculties of Soul and members of Body move as it listeth to evil; but a principle of Grace that inspires us with new life in our Duties, comes from Heaven, and is obtain'd in the use of his Ordinances. This does not in the least obscure the Glory of God's Free-Grace; for his Spirit excites us to Duties, and supplies us with strength to perform them; but it directs us to seek God in the ways appointed, that we may find him.

That therefore Christians may rightly judge of this heavenly frame, and intercession of the Divine Spirit preparing them to ask from God what he is to return, (Errors herein proceeding either from mistaking the work of Christ's Spirit helping them to ask, or from applying the return to what they ought not,) I shall give the following marks accompanying such a Prayer, and that observ'd from my own personal Experience.

First, A height of spiritual Thoughts and Affections throughout in Prayer, or in one particular Petition thereof, far beyond common seriousness, which tho' by words it be almost inexplicable, so as to make the unexperiencing
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Christian comprehend it, yet it is easily perceiv'd by the experiencing Christian. In this rais'd frame of the Soul, either in solemn or ejaculatory Prayer, there is such heavenliness of Thought, as if the Soul were already in Heaven's Enjoyment: And for the comfort of young Observers, I must acknowledge, that my spirituality of frame in Prayer, the real preparation of Christ's Spirit to ask, and certainly evidential of God's return, was at first observ'd to be much less in degree, tho' the same in nature, than now it is; one degree of experimental Knowledge, preparing for farther degrees. This brings to my Thoughts the gradual rise of Christians meetness for Heaven, by Christ's Spirit in his common way of working by the use of means, of which observing Christians are sweetly sensible.

Secondly, Another mark of Christ's Spirit's intercession in Prayer, as token of God's acceptance thereof, and his return thereto, is, when with an Address so spiritually perform'd, goes along a comfortable quiet of mind concerning the Event, tho' the praying-Believer be encompass'd with Afflictions. A calm composure of mind in our trust upon the gracious Will and Wisdom of God to dispose of all things concerning us, is our Duty, but 'tis the Gift and Work of the Holy Spirit, who is stiled the Comforter. We must observe in the Word of God, what he Commands us to do, he promises

mises to enable us to do : He Commands us, That *Sin should not reign in our mortal bodies* ; and he has Promised, That *Sin shall not have dominion over us* : In like manner, God Commands us, *To be careful for nothing, but by supplication to lay our requests before God* : And certainly freedom from anxiety and disquiet, and a full possession of the Soul in Patience, concerning any thing, in commending our Affairs to God by Prayer, is the product of the Divine Spirit, and not from the natural temper and stayedness of the Mind : And where the Christian actually experiences it in Prayer, he may safely conclude himself influenc'd by a Divine Spirit, not only in raising his frame to ask, but leaving it at God's footstool as to the Event, and that as presaging of God's returning favour, and introductive of his blessing. The Promise of God is the foundation of this Trust ; *Psal. 37. 5. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass* : The habit of Resignation may be in the Soul, but 'tis drawn forth into exercise by the renewed influences of the Spirit.

Thirdly, You may judge of the intercession of Christ's Spirit in your Souls, in addressing God by Prayer, by the passages of Providence that bring about the return of this Prayer. In the Observation whereof, the speciality of a Divine Hand in the Providences bringing the return about, is as discoverable,
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as immediateness of a Divine Spirit influencing the Soul to ask with calm and resign'd submission, as to the Event. The observing Christians do often see these two joyned together, and each illustrating one another, where others do not, or hardly are at the pains to observe the one or the other; And what the *Psalmist* in the first *ver.* of the 116th *Psal.* in the fifth *ver.* of the 118th *Psal.*, and in the 121st *Psal.*, finds that Prayers return observ'd, and the passages of Providence discovering or bringing it about, is powerful in bringing his Soul to the actual exercise of love to Reliance upon Admiration and Praise of God: *I love the Lord because he has heard my supplication; I called to the Lord and he heard me, therefore shall I see my desire; and he is now my strength and my song; I will praise thee, for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation:* The unobserving Christian therefore of Prayer's return, and of the method bringing it about, loses thereby the actual excitement of the excellent Graces, and so miss of much comfort and light that others enjoy.

Fourthly, You may judge of the intercession of Christ's Spirit in your Prayer, by the never-failing correspondency between a Prayer perform'd as is exprest, and a return thereto: This is according to God's own Word, and the Experience of diligent, true, observing Christians; And if it were not so, I doubt not but
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amongst thousands of Experiences training me to the knowledge thereof, and establishment therein, I should have met with one contradicting it. I know I have met with many passages upon my advancement in the knowledge of God's ways, that at first view seem'd greatly opposing of this ; and if a strict observation had been intermitted, the shaking of my Faith, or mistake therein, had been the consequence ; but keeping strict to observation of Providences present, and reflection upon past ones, with patient waiting the full sight of the return to Prayer appear'd, with that improvement of being more serious and considerate in the observation, and comparing God's ways of Providence, and inward workings of his Spirit, according to his revealed Will. I would subjoin to these few marks of Prayer with the intercession of Christ's Spirit, some things you are to beware of, as occasions of mistaking this Prayer, and deluding you with a false resemblance of it ; and something I would advise your observation of, that may be a means to lead you into the performance of Prayer aright, and thereby an opportunity of obtaining Christ's Spiritual influences therein.

I begin with the latter ; First, Be advised to enter upon private Prayer without any discomposure of Spirit from the things Temporal that pleasantly affect us : The thoughts of them will be ready to rush themselves upon your remembrance : I could easily set down
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the many Prayers I have had spoil'd by such things rushing upon my thoughts at the time; but circumstances will not permit.

Secondly, Without any vexation upon your Spirit, unless you use Prayer in such a circumstance, as a help to quiet your mind, and to suppress the further rise of corrupt motions; for which end I dare recommend private Prayer as a healing means.

Thirdly, Have your thoughts as free of worldly Persons and Things as possibly you can; otherways passing immediately from Conversation with the world, you will be apt to cast a lingering look back upon the world, and to have thoughts stealing into you, which will hinder the Spirit's assistance to pray, in the manner before charecteriz'd.

Fourthly, Do not cursorily perform the Duty of Prayer to satisfy your mind that you have discharg'd the Duty, and till night you are not to return to it; but consider, that Prayer is not only a Duty, but a heavenly Priviledge, wherein we may with a filial freedom address our selves to the Lord Almighty as our Father, who from the infinite treasures of his love will supply all our wants, and satisfy all our regular desires: Therefore let us be liberal in the time for that Duty. By continuance in Prayer, our Hearts are more fully possess'd with God; and by wrestling with him,

him, we get a holy heat of Affection, tho' in our entrance into the Duty we were but coldly affected.

These are some of the hindrances which a Christian is to watch against; and there are many other which the observing Christian will discover, and endeavour to prevent.

Concerning the other, to wit, the occasions of mistaking the natural workings of the Affections, for the Spirit's work in Prayer, I shall first in general say, That the not considering the state of the Soul, first designing to Pray, in Praying, and after Prayer, leads into many mistakes: According to the inward and habitual frame of the Soul, such is the exercise of the Affections in that Duty, and usually such are the influences of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, The judging that common seriousness in Christian Duties, is all the spirituality that is necessary or attainable, may be an occasion of mistake: For this will make them content, without seeking for supernatural influences, and without the perception of them. Close walking with God in the often use of Prayer, is the best help to train this Soul in the further knowledge of the Breathings of Christ's Spirit.

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Thirdly, A more than ordinary seriousness, from the ardent desire of obtaining the thing petition'd for, may impose upon some with its resemblance to spirituality ; as also a Christian's indifferency in obtaining a thing pray'd for, may impose a resemblance to the Souls of straitning in Prayer thorough Christ's withdrawals.

Fourthly, The rational hope of obtaining our Petitions, or the rational improbability of obtaining, may sometimes impose a resemblance of spirituality and constraint in Prayer.

An Experience whereof I have had concerning Friends dangerously Ill, who in my thoughts, and in the judgment of their Physitians, have been Dying, from which seeming certainty of their Dying, I have had an unwillingness, as being altogether needless to pray for them.

I remember of a Child, who was dangerously Ill, without sensible pulse, cold as clay, and in the opinion of all, Dying or Dead ; which rational conjecture so imprest me, as to restrain me from Prayer concerning it : But next morning in my Closet Prayers, not designing a Petition for the Child, supposing it then assuredly Dead, a sudden seriousness and spirituality seized me, carrying me forth in Prayer for this Child, which at first astonish'd my Thoughts, till sending to know if alive, I heard of its life and great amendment.

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To the praise of the infinite condescension of God, I shall mention two directions as preventive of Error and Mistakes in the observation of Prayer, and the enjoyments accompanying it, and that as an encouragement to weak Christians, to use these means without fear, or doubting of God's wise and loving conduct of them, to preserve them from Error, unless God's permission thereof be for the Christian's good, taking that way to establish Grace stronger in the Soul.

First, His impressing me at the time with the true state of the matter, that never to my remembrance was I under false resemblances of spirituality or constraint in Prayer, but at the time I had some discovery of it.

Secondly, Such dangers never occur'd to my Experience, till God had establish'd my right knowledge both of spirituality and constraint in Prayer; and that by Experiences in abundance, a part of which is laid down in the Historical part of this Discourse: I say this, as a witness for God's Condescension and Wisdom in training the sincere diligent Christian, groaning after the true knowledge of God's ways in the right use of means; yet I say it not to encourage laziness, either in the beginning or more grown Christian, but excite them to more serious and strict observation of their Souls, that they may not be deceived.

I find it more common with private Christians than formerly, to observe enlargement in Prayer, and constraint therein, as forerunners of their injoying or not injoying what is Petition'd from God ; but in Conversation, I find their observation as too narrow and confined, looking upon that that may be a Christian's common Food in the close continuance in the means of Grace, as an extraordinary Feast, and minding it mostly concerning the recovery, or the dying of Friends, and not extending it to all things, hoping the life, or fearing the death of one, from a Minister's pouring forth his Soul, or from a private Christian's fervent address to God, or the constraint of both : It makes me remember how extraordinarily amazing and delightful such Experiences were, when at first observ'd by me in the more tender days of my Knowledge in Experimental Christianity; and makes me greatly afraid, that however notional Knowledge abound amongst Ministers and People that have liv'd so many years under Gospel Instruction ; yet Heart-Service to God in the performance of Duties, or at least strict continuance therein, especially this delightful Duty of private Prayer, is not so common, and so the Enjoyments that follow, are less and seldomer experienc'd : But to this real and comfortable Experience of Enlargement in Prayer, concerning the recovery of Friends, that is more observ'd by Christians, let me give you two cautionary Instructions from my
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own Experience therein, and of which some observing Christians are not at the pains to remark, concerning this Enlargement in Prayer.

First of all, Not peremptorily to hope the recovery of a Friend from once observing your selves, or others, carried out in a heavenly manner, in Prayer concerning them; and tho' answerable to this once observ'd spirituality, appear some real amendment at the time; yet often without the continuance of Prayer, thus spiritual, their amendment falls off, and suitable to their omission of further Praying thus, their Friend Dies, unless God act in a stream of more than ordinarily condescension to weak Christians. I know not but the Reliance upon the Evidence of one Prayer spiritually put up for a Person's Recovery, may occasion carelessness in the Duty afterward, and so hinder the obtaining the blessing that was thought to be coming to us. I remember a Holy Christian, who was in great Thoughtfulness concerning the Recovery of his Wife, for whom he had so near access to God in Prayer, that he had great hopes of her life; but she dying, gave him some more concern of Thought, that he should hope on so good ground, and yet be mistaken; whereas his near access to God in Prayer was but once experienc'd, his Eye was upon the frame of his Soul in Prayer, and not upon the Words utter'd, while under this Divine Influence: His omission of continuing thus to Pray, hindered him from clearer

discovery of God's Ways: His missing the observation of his Words, rendered him incapable of applying the return to what God helped him to Ask; to wit, God's love to her Soul greatly manifested in her passage hence. At this very time I can instance in a Child for whom I found great spirituality in Prayer, but without the least appearance of amendment for a fourth night's time, which seem'd to oppose all former Experience, and might have occasion'd great mistake if I had not recorded my words, as well as frame in Prayer spiritually perform'd, which were centered in one Petition, without the least deviating from it throughout the whole fourth night, That the Lord would spare his life, and that his life might be precious in his sight, without the least intermixture of desire or word in Prayer for Health or Recovery. When a Prayer spiritually put up, is remarkt as such, and corresponded with a return of amendment, but followed with after-laziness and forbearance of the same diligence, no wonder the return stopt, and a contrary effect to what was desir'd, or imminent appear; If therefore your heavenly frame in petitioning Health or the like, be once observ'd and continued in, I never knew such petitions return to fail; but if this frame be obtain'd but once, and afterward it go off, you'll undoubtedly find amendment answerable to the time of having strength spiritually to petition it; but such a frame going off, either
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thorough the intermission of your own endeavour after, or God's with-holding it, nothing else but disappointment to your expectation and desire, and justly to your dependence upon once experiencing the frame, falls out: It is laziness in the right performance of means, and not continuing therein, that keeps off the many experiences of inward Religion, or occasions the mistakes that abounds concerning the great things of inward Religion; however some satisfy themselves with the ill usage of that Proposition, *God's ways are in the depth*. It is from multitudes of instances experienced, that if the Soul be carried forth in Prayer for any Friend ill, that suitable thereto there is many times visible hopes; but if this frame is not continu'd in, the Friend does decline and die. I know that once feeling this hopeful frame has made some Christians lazy and secure, and not by serious Address afterward, lay themselves in God's way to obtain the continuance of this frame, and so their Health and Life has gone: To conclude thence, That return is not always suited to spirituality of frame, is mistake and erroneous, and evidence of your lazy unexactness in observation of God with the Soul: Right observation hereof would discover condescending Mercy in God, on purpose to keep the Christian continually holding on that Duty of Prayer till the final determination issu'd, which meets commonly with great reward, tho' the continuance and spiri-

tuality of Prayer continued in, be his own work in the Soul.

A second Cautionary Instruction, is, Not to be peremptory in judging the spirituality of another man's Frame, or an Event answerable thereto; but to be strict and diligent in judging your own Frame, and Events consequential to it.

I would advise great carefulness in judging another man's spirituality in Prayer, as presaging of certain return answerable to the spirituality supposed in his Frame.

1. First, Because of the difficulty of judging another man's heart in Prayer: It requires exactness of Observation to raise a Christian to the capacity of knowing his own Frame when spiritual, or to raise him to an establishment in the reality of Correspondency between his Prayer's spirituality, and its certain return; but how can we be sure of another man's heavenliness? I have known many under no other knowledge of Christianity than what is Notional, acquainted with no other power in performing Duties, than that of Education, and Self-strength, and yet pray with that sense, distinctness, and outwardly appearing heavenliness, that the Hearers have been affected with a good hope of the person, and a delightful thought of their spiritual seriousness in Prayer; yea, the strength of natural parts in the exercise

cise of Prayer, may heat the affections, and may persuade a person and others that he prays in the Holy Ghost. If therefore you may hear a Prayer from a meer Professor, so near resembling a Christian's Prayer, influenced by Christ's Spirit, then to be sure a real Christian seriously performing a Prayer with a natural affecting way of expression, may make a near resemblance to a heavenly Frame, like unto that sensible preparation given in by a Divine Spirit to ask what God is to return. Now to judge either of these Prayers seemingly put up in spirituality as really spiritual, and to expect from thence the health and life of your Friend, upon that sure foundation of God's Word, telling us that he prepares the Christian to ask when he is to encline his ear, and yet the person does not recover, may greatly tend to make them mistake, when they judge it from the ignorance of their minds, and the delusion of Satan, a failure in God's truth, rather than a failure in themselves, in judging that Prayer spiritual, and presaging a gracious return, which really bore no evidence of either. But if you observe the Prayer of a Minister, or other Christian in publick, put up spiritually, and judge it as God's Token given you for good; You that are concern'd, and really acquainted with experimental Christianity, do not only find a sense and impression at the time of this Prayer, as its being God's evidence of good, but retiring your selves to your private Prayer, you'll find the same Frame upon your

own Soul, as evidence both of God's returning it, and of the other's performing it spiritually; and that your judgement therefore was right, when a return is in God's design; though his Spirit be one, yet he influences many at the same time to ask the same thing of God. Thus there are more Witnesses to his mercy, and its greatness appears the more, and he is the more honoured thereby.

Both Cautions I'll endeavour to explain by a late Instance of my own Experience amongst many I could produce, which for Brevity I must omit, that thereby you may know how many times a Christian is help'd by a Divine Spirit to ask of God for a Friend's Recovery, and yet unless continued thorough the whole Illness, the Recovery has not issu'd; thereby you may also know the right judging of another's spiritual frame in prayer. The Instance is concerning a Friend of my own, for whom the Lord was in a solemn manner addrest to by some Ministers, who set apart some time for this very purpose; they seemingly were wonderfully carri'd out in Prayer, answerable to which there was a present Relief appear'd, but went off soon after, and continued not. Throughout the course of their Illness, I found in my self in Prayer a perfect driness as to the frame of my mind, and words in Prayer for them, which made me continually express my self with fear of their death, excepting one Prayer in an evening in
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my Closet, which upon discourse with other Friends, I found to be the very exact time of others being united to pray, and the time of there being some hopes; of which joint and solemn Prayer I knew nothing at the time of my own observation which I had set down in my Diary, till afterward in discourse with Friends; and I had set it down with special Remark; but excepting that one Prayer, I found them lost in all my other Petitions, and proclaim'd my fears, when their Physicians had great hopes, and their symptoms had some abatement, with the wondring of Friends what could be my reason moving me to think this.

If any should ask me, after what has been said concerning Spirituality in Prayer, and its answerableness to return, Whether Returns from God are only to such Petitions breath'd upon sensibly by Christ's Spirit, and raising them to greater heavenliness of thought and word, than commonly; or if extended to Prayers perform'd with no other sensible seriousness than the sincere endeavour of a Christian's self?

Before the Answer, I shall first lay down the difference between strengthening and comforting Influences of Christ's Spirit; *David* had his withdrawals of comfortable Influences to such a degree, and to such a time, as made him cry out, *Psal. 77. 7. Is his mercy clean gone? will he be favourable no more?* And in ver. 8. *Does his*

his promise fail for evermore ? And yet at the same time, though insensible then thereof, he was under the strengthening Divine Influences of Christ's Spirit ; for when *David* comes to himself, after he had said, *I have cleans'd my heart in vain ;* and returning thence to the enjoyment of comforting Influences, he says in ver. 22, 23. *Though I was so foolish, and carried my self as a beast before thee, nevertheless thou hast holden me up by my right hand.* From whence I draw a Caution to dejected Christians, Not to think that tho' God withdraw his comforting breathings formerly experienced, and that for holy ends of Reproof for not better entertaining them formerly enjoy'd, or of excitation to prize them more when they return, and to keep closer and stricter, and more continually to the use of means to obtain, and to retain them ; that therefore they have lost the grace they had once the sensible evidence of, by Christ's comforting Influences, and so give Satan opportunity of following this thought with his suggestion of Apostacy, and danger of damnation, and the being no advantage in the further use of means ; whereas the continuance therein, is evidence of spiritual supporting power, and of God's holding them up from falling, however unsensible they are of his comforting Influences.

Secondly, There is a difference between spiritual Influences strengthening the Soul to the continued use of sincere Prayer, and between
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spiritual Influences, making the other comfortably sensible, and carrying the Soul out thereby with more fervency and joy than at other times.

Thirdly, That shorter Intermissions of Duties, and sincere endeavours therein, contribute greatly to the drawing down of continued comfortable Influences, and that the more close we walk with God in the use of means, the more clear comfortable delightful enjoyments occur.

I answer therefore first, That a Return is certain to that Prayer that is directed by the Holy Spirit to God, for obtaining a blessing for us; and an evidence of this direction is, by the heavenly frame of mind, and more than ordinary freedom of utterance in the Duty.

Secondly, That often God returns a Prayer perform'd with spiritual Influences, though they are without that delightful evidence at the time of Prayer; the Spirit of God exciting and strengthening the Soul to ask, carries him to nothing but what is suitable to God's Word, and with Resignation in the Christian's self, whether this heavenliness of frame be sensible at the time of Prayer, or not; and therefore if God's Spirit be helping the Soul really, tho' insensibly to the Christian, or really and sensibly too, a return certainly follows that Prayer, but with
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this difference, that under heavenliness of frame he enjoys the Comfort of the return afore-hand, and under strengthening influences, he is not so certain of the spirituality of its performance or its acceptance with God, till the return make it manifest.

Thirdly, That such a comfortable sense of spiritual Supplies to ask, is many times the reward of serious self-denying Christians, and truly depending upon God in Prayer ; and that the other is the allowance of real Christians, but less watchful, and not searching into, and desirous of the knowledge of God's ways, and therefore have not that assurance of present acceptance and after-return, as the serious observing Christians have.

Fourthly, That comforting Influences are more experienc'd as the portion of beginning Christians, and training up to the knowledge of God, of tender-hearted Christians, and of those who walk continually with God in their thoughts by ejaculation.

Fifthly, The evidence of supporting Influences without the other, is continuance in serious use of means, notwithstanding God with-holds its comfort, which must evidence a power above the carnal nature.

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My Advice therefore is, To begin the use of serious Prayer, as well as of observation of outward Providences, that you may have fellowship with the Godhead even on earth, and come to the knowledge of God's ways without the fear of mistake, because of the infinite wisdom and tender love that is in your Guide and Conductor, leading you in the right way, unless you stand still, and walk not further on in the use of means, or walk in them inadvertently. Pray the Lord to prepare you to ask the things which he has declar'd in his Word, he is ready to give, and in his time you shall obtain them. This humble, constant, and affectionate continuance in Prayer, will be an excellent means to make you understand the method of God's bestowing mercies, as the certain sign of his Favour.

By this Duty of Prayer, and observation therein, you'll be able to expose all the Errors of the Age; you'll see *Arminianism* at the root of our new-sprung Errors: for if they cannot defend Self-sufficiency to will and chuse spiritual things, and to comply with saving means, they must look to Christ, and acknowledge that conversion from its beginning to its perfection, is to be ascribed to Divine Grace. Others deny the Deity of Christ, and think him as meer Man like themselves; inferior to the Devils, who acknowledged him the Son of God, his power over them, by begging he would not torment them,

them, but finding the Doctrine of Jesus Christ's being God so clearly asserted in the Scriptures, they turn Deists, and deny all revealed Religion, that so we may have nothing above our own Reason and Self-sufficiency to recur to, for the obtaining the Favour of God here, and of Heaven hereafter. God believ'd as Creator, and men living in the practice of publick moral Vertue, though private Vices are allowed, is sufficient, in the opinion of some, for their present peace and esteem, and their future happiness: But the Scripture and Experience does strongly refute those *Arminian* Errors, in that first Chapter of *John*, and the 13th verse, *We are not born of the will of man, but of God.* And in the second Chapter of the *Philippians*, ver. 13. *It is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* These Texts are confirmed by the experience of all sincere Christians, who feel the grace of God, in turning them from the love of Sin, to the love of Holiness; and carrying them thro' a tempting World, to the eternal Kingdom; exposing both, with the embracers of their Errors, in their true Colours? Their growth is no marvel to me; their not being more is a greater wonder. Prophaneness in Practice, Christianity in meer Profession, Experimental Religion discouraged by some, and neglected too much in the Conversation of God's own Children, with their divisions and unnecessary heats, being the great Nourishers of such wild Grapes.

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I do believe I may, without the breach of Charity, say, 'That if *Arminians* in this Age are understanding in God's Word, their knowledge thereof is meerly Notional, with Self-Paraphrases thereupon, but ignorant of its reality from the experience thereof in their own Soul.

That what I say may not seem Censure, but what has true ground for suggesting, I'll call forth all the experienced Christians on earth to witness, If any one of them was ever able to bring themselves by their own strength, and when they would, to a heavenly frame of Soul in Prayer; yea, though God has given forth means to obtain this frame. I appeal to their experience, whether their reliance upon these means, has not often obstructed this Gift of Christ's Spirit influencing the Soul depending thereupon in the use of means.

We have Millions of Instances, and I believe I could produce thousands from my own personal experience, of being out of a heavenly frame of mind, and that suddenly and unexpectedly a ravishing heavenly frame has seized me, without any previous working my self therein, only suddenly this frame has seized my Soul like a sudden Gale of Wind, filling the Sails of the Faculties of the Soul, and driving the Ship towards the heavenly Harbour of God's Throne.

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We have also multitudes of Experiences of the same power of Christ's Spirit suddenly, undesignedly, and powerfully working, with a verse of a Chapter read, and with a sentence of a Sermon preached, both the conversion of Christians, and also the spiritualizing of their frames, without the least design or forethought in the Creature's self, and without any other strength of man than laying himself in God's Road, and Highway of Duties, in which he commonly walks, and by which he acts when and how he pleases.

My Argument is from lesser to greater : If a Christian cannot bring forth nor retain a spiritual frame in the Soul when or as long as he will, how much less is an Unbeliever capable of chusing and working Grace in his Soul when he will? Where is that Instance of a Christian that dare pretend, when he is in a heavenly frame, to be able so to keep himself? I dare say any that ever had it in reality and power, would desire no other lot on earth, but to be kept in this Heaven on earth.

If thou therefore, O *Arminian*, art incapable of believing without a Divine Power, or to exercise a heavenly frame in Prayer when thou wouldest, or to retain a spiritual frame when thou art in its enjoyment, lay by Self, and forge no more lying delusions for thy Bulwark, all
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experiencing Christians find out thy falshood, and bemoan thy misery. I should rejoice if God should honour me as an Instrument to prevail with thee to walk in those means in the method mentioned, that with a Divine Spirit accompanying them, you might be led to a discovery of your Errors through blindness, and the evil of broaching and fructifying them on earth.

Apprehend with your selves how unmeet you'll be to admire the Infiniteness of Mercy, in providing these blessed helps of Divine Revelation, Divine Providence, and Divine Spirit; and how unfit to praise his Name for either, when now you derogate from all, to affix it upon Self. Let not matters unexperienced, and capable of being experienced in the use of few and easy means, be debated first, but rather let your arguings succeed to your experience, unless they be such Mysteries as are meerly to be credited according to Divine Revelation, and incapable of man's comprehension in this life; and then in God's method of working and watering Grace, you'll obtain a full discovery of Self-insufficiency, the need of a Redeemer to look to, and depend upon God's revealed Word in conjunction with his Divine Spirit, as your chief helps hereto.

An *Arminian*, to plead his own power, is like the prophane and meer Professor, mocking and doubting of fellowship with God in Prayer. It is the *Arminian's* want of Grace, or at least the want

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of the observation of steps, that has led to their Grace and its growth, that keeps them still exalting of Self; and it's the others never experiencing communion with God in Prayer, that make them ridicule it. Put Self to the tryal, *Arminian*, whether you can in your strength work Grace? try it, and do not delay till a dying hour. And if you find you can't, then bring to the tryal another strength, even that of a Divine Spirit in the use of means recorded in this applicatory part, and then you'll follow Christ's Command, and become as a little Child, obedient in the use of God's means to help forward the right knowledge of him and your selves, and shall be enabled to get out of Self-confidence, into a reliance upon a more Divine Foundation, even Christ's Spirit, the Gift given to the Christians in the world, upon Christ's leaving the Earth, and his Ascension to Heaven.

By Prayer, and Observation therewith, you will soon discover *Socinianisms* Falshood, as it has sprung from *Arminianism*, by so much exalting Self; so the discovery of the vanity of the latter, soon lays open in Christian experience the delusion of the former. Let a Christian but observe the difficulty of laying aside Self-trust, even after God's most establishing Experiences dethroning it, and the proneness of his mind to admix Self in Duties rightly perform'd. The difficulty of putting on Self-denial, and of being cloath'd with that
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glorious Grace of Faith ; yea, the means made use of by God to uncloath us of the one, and to adorn us with the other. The Observation I say of all these in a Christian, will soon convince us of our insufficiency, and encline us to exalt Christ as the Object of the Soul's trust and adoration, for the destroying of that branch of *Socinianism*, even the denial of the Godhead of our blessed Redeemer. Besides Scripture plainness, the attributing to Christ all the uncommunicable perfections of the Deity is proof against them. Will all the *Socinians* Sophistry on earth make me disbelieve his Godhead, when I have experienc'd that in the worship and adoration of Christ, the Grace of God that has converted me from Sin to Holiness is then in exercise ? G O D is a jealous G O D, and will not part with that Prerogative of Adoration, no more to meer man than to vain Images ; and yet, Who are the sanctified ones in Christ ? who are the Persons *Paul* judg'd meet to write unto, in his first *v.* of his first *ch.* of his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, even such who call upon the name of *Jesus Christ* our Lord not nominally so, but such a Lord as is made the object of Adoration in the Gospel Churches ; none else being fit Members to make up a Christian Church, and all denying Christ's Godhead and this Adoration due to his Name, exclude themselves from being fit matter for a Gospel Church. My Adoration of Christ as God, I observe most solemn and with an intire trust in him, when I

am in a heavenly frame of Soul in private Prayer, being then certain that the exercise of Adoration to Christ is the true effect of God's Divine Spirit influencing my Soul. Often in meditation in participating the Lord's Supper, the admiration and adoration of Christ as God blessed for ever, has been kept up with great warmth and spirituality in the Soul. To the *Socinians* I would put this Question, If ever in a private Prayer to God, in participation of the Lord's Supper, or upon a sick, and in appearance dying Bed, they experienced a heavenly ravishing frame of Soul? and if they have, what exercise of thought in either of these three Circumstances concerning Christ and themselves then seiz'd them? I dare answer, That if really influenced with a heavenly frame, *Arminius* with honour to Self, and *Socinus* with his disparagement of Christ, were low as the dust in their Opinion then.

How unsuitable are those who deny Christ this Tribute on earth, to reign with him in Heaven, when the Mystery of the Trinity, the Mystery of Redemption by God the Son, and the Mystery of Conversion by God the Spirit, shall be perfectly unfolded; when the admiration and adoration of God, for his infinitely wise and condescending Mercy in delivering man, must be in frequent exercise: This is the most excellent, beneficial and comfortable object of a Christian's Faith, Contemplation and Affection. We can only see it here through a Glass darkly; in the full sight is the perfection
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and felicity of the Saints in Glory : But the serious thoughts of redeeming love in our present state, fills the Soul with a Joy unspeakable and glorious.

God constituted man at first with all the necessary faculties of Body and Mind, and with their beautiful Ornaments, that man by considering the excellent Goodness of his Maker, might Glorifie him, and not meerly please himself in his own Perfections, and the fruition of Paradise : In like manner, a gracious Soul is renewed to Christ's Image in Conversion, not that the doing of it may be proclaim'd as his own work and Glory thereby derogated from the Godhead of Christ and his Blessed Spirit ; Man is made meet for Heaven by Grace growing in his Soul on Earth ; And does he pass that perfecting change at the day of Judgment ? and is he admitted to these glorious Visions in Heaven for the admiration of himself ? No ; He will know, that as the Creation of Man was the product of the Counsel and Power of the Deity, as it's declared in these words, *Let us make man* ; so the Conversion of man from the power of Sin to Holiness, is the sole effect of the free Mercy and Power of God, and for the honour of his Grace. Pride first discover'd it self in our fatal fall, and has continued to show it self in arrogating to our selves what is entirely due to God ; but the perfected Spirits of Just men, know how unworthy and unprepared they were to see God in his full Glory : They

continually pay the humble Homage of Praise to him that sits upon the Throne, whose Spirit sanctified them, and to the Lamb, by whose Sacrifice and Satisfaction Heaven was opened to them. Can a meer man receive the Hallelujahs above, and rob the Father of the Praise of the Triumphant Saints in Heaven? With what faces will those who deny the Deity of Christ, look upon a Redeemer glorified as God and Man in one Person, when such a view of him will force their remembrance of denying him in their Minds and Hearts, the Adoration due to him as God, equal with the Father, tho' he humbled himself that we might be exalted, and might in Heaven see his Glory, and be transform'd into his Glorious Likeness? It will be righteous, that those who vilified the Redeemer, should not reign with him; and since they deny, that he wash'd away the guilt of their Sins with his Blood, it's righteous that their guilt should remain on them for ever. He that feels the power of Christ strengthening him, will notwithstanding the subtil Cavils of others, glorifie him as the incarnate Son of God, who purchas'd Grace and Glory for him by his Humiliation, and confers it in his Exaltation.

As for Deists, who deny all Reveal'd Religion, their Error is brought for the support of *Socinianism*; for in the Scripture there is so full a proof of the Eternal Deity of the Son of God, and of the Holy Spirit, which is a Doctrine

ctrine supernatural and incomprehensible by our narrow minds, that they will rather return to Heathenism, than receive the Gospel: Besides, the purity and perfection of the Gospel in its Commands they will not obey, and therefore will only follow the dim light of Nature, that discovers not many Sins which they love, nor some Duties from which they are averse.

You therefore under this Character; Let me invite you to the trial of God's Word, and if you find in your Experience any one thing that was incomprehensible to natural Reason, but sensibly felt in your Souls, it will lead you to the desire and endeavour of Experiencing more. If in Prayer you come to understand a strength above your own, even that of a Divine Spirit according to Scripture Revelation thereof, you'll desire to comprehend many other Christian Priviledges and Changes of the Soul by Grace, of which you never formerly had any true Idea: If once you come in the use of means to believe and trust things unseen, which to a faithless Creature is a Mysterious Doctrine, but of Scripture Revelation, and certainly experienc'd as Truth by Holy Souls.

To what purpose, O Deist, should I trouble my self to argue the case of there being a spiritual heavenly frame in Prayer, of there being a trust to a thing unseen, more strong and durable than a trust to an object before the Eyes; the one being supported by the Divine Truth and Power, the other by a weak mu-

table Creature. All the Argumentation and Oratory on Earth cannot make a sincere Christian doubt of the Truth of the Gospel, which he has felt to be the power of God to save him from Sin and Hell: A superficial assent to the Doctrine of the Gospel may be easily chang'd; but when the Truth of it is fixt in the Soul by deep Experience, a Christian is as stable as the Center against the strongest storms of opposition: You may as well suppose a rational Soul to be without thinking, as when it's convinc'd by over-powering light, and an inward real sense of the Truth of Religion Reveal'd from Heaven, he should be apt to change his Faith, and like a Drunken Man reel from one Opinion to another.

I therefore earnestly recommend the endeavour after an Experimental Sense of the Truth of the Gospel in the use of all Ordinances, as the best preservative from Unbelief.

But now I come to the third and last mean of bringing Creatures into the certainty of God's Word and inward Religion, and that is a right reading of the Scriptures, not a superficial reading of them in Obedience to Parents, or out of Custom, a Chapter morning and evening, without ever one thought reflective upon what is read; but such a reading as may lay you in the way of the influence of a Divine Spirit, who communicates light unto us in this Duty, as well as in that of spiritual Observation and Prayer; we must fix it in our thoughts

thoughts as the Rule of our Life, and particularly observe what may be directive in those Duties that belong to us, and may serve for Comfort in disquieting Afflictions to which we may be expos'd; Mr. *Pool's* Annotations are useful in our Reading. This method was marvellously blessed to me in the practice of it with Observation and Prayer; I soon saw the worth of God's Word, the benefit of using it in this manner, and my Soul was ardently and constantly desirous of Divine Grace to conform me entirely to the Precepts and Examples of Holiness set down in it.

The method I us'd at first, was, To Read a Chapter of the Old Testament, a *Psal*m, and a Chapter of the New, with *Pool's* Annotations upon each; and this sincere endeavour after the Knowledge of God in his Precepts, was soon accompanied with the inward workings of a Divine Spirit, influencing me with a desire after, and, in some measure, Conformity thereto.

Psal. 119. How shall a young man cleanse his ways? It is by taking heed thereto according to God's Word: Those that read not his Word, or read it in a customary way, obtain no knowledge thereof, or at least what is only notional to discourse of; How can a Christian cleanse his Heart and Ways, or be in the means of obtaining Christ's Spirit helping forward this work, but by comparing considerately his Ways and Thoughts to God's Divine Truths, as he goes on in the reading of them;
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and nothing more fixes the Thoughts to this, than a reading with Annotations, and many times in comparing Scripture to Annotation, a comparison of ones self to Scripture, either for instruction, or comfort occurs ; reading with Thoughtfulness is a mean God many times blesses with sweet success that way.

Reading with reflecting the light of the Word upon the Soul, warms it, meets the Affections, and makes them receptive of heavenly impressions.

The meer Professor, Religious only from Education, I greatly compassionate for this neglect ; it being for the serious, a probable mean of affording establishment in their right notional Knowledge wherewith they have been imprest, thorough the instruction of Education ; and applicative Reading the Scriptures, is the means, with the Spirit's blessing, of establishing us on that Divine Foundation of Faith and Obedience.

This Advice of Reading the Scriptures with *Pool's* Annotations, is not to be limited to those only in younger years, but necessarily to be extended to Persons of more mature Age.

First, I advise the younger, That they would not rest satisfied to answer their Parents Instruction, or in the customary method of reading

so many Chapters a day, and that at their usual times ; but to consider what degrees of knowledge of the Word, and Conformity to it, they are advanc'd to by it, that by right Conceptions of God and his Holy Will, they be preserv'd from youthful Lusts, from the Erroneous Opinions and vicious and contagious Examples of others : Let the first Principles of Religion in this way, be deeply set in them, before they read Controversies in Religion : I do really acknowledge, that from reading a Chapter, with Mr. *Pool's* Annotations concerning a point, I have had more clear knowledge and confirmation than by reading Controversial Books ; And I do believe it one of the most common failures of Youth under Religious Education, not reading the Scriptures with Annotations, which greatly fixes the Thoughts upon ones self, and God's Divine Rule, if conform unto it either in Heart or Life.

Be advis'd therefore, to begin your knowledge of Spiritual Things right, and not to end where you should have begun ; and to read but one Chapter with Annotations and Observation, rather than many slightly ; remarking that part of Scripture your Thoughts at the time of reading mostly fix to, and observe the method of Providence afterward appearing, and perhaps you may discover its correspondence to the matter remarkt, either as Instruction or Comfort.

Secondly, I advise grown Professors, who busie themselves with Controversies, and with Books Eloquently written, or of high Notions, but still are without an affectionate vital knowledge of Divine Truths, and in danger of being infected with this or the other new-sprung Error: I say to such, That I am afraid the advice given to younger Persons has not been follow'd by them; I therefore earnestly exhort them to read the Scriptures with a design to be enlightned and sanctified by them, and with the assistance of a sound Expositor, that their imperfect and unsetled Conceptions of Divine Things may be rectified, and strongly imprest within them, and the power of them may be visible in their lives.

If you cannot enjoy full measure of time once a day, do it by parts. Many sit in their Shops waiting for their Customers, and Reading of Books of no value, or thinking upon what they can give no account of afterward, that have great opportunity of using this method: Many might detract from their great time spent in Dressings and Visitings, and thereby might have more leisure for this profitable and founding work: I am hopeful, if this method was once in use, there might be an excellent foundation laid for your Knowledge of God the Lawgiver, and of your own Loyalty and Duty to him in Heart and Life.
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The delight the Soul would taste in Reading the Word, would cause us to disrelish all other Books, tho' never so pleasing to the carnal Fancy and Desires that govern the unrenewed part of Mankind. I have often thought upon the fancy so delighted with variety, and have pitied some such who would be taken with every new thing, but did not Experimentally know the varieties of things in the Scriptures greatly alluring, worth the reading and the contemplating, and the varieties of impressions affecting the mind in reading the same Scripture at various times.

But I have observ'd, the better the Duty is, the more instruction and comfort abound therein, inward corruption and Satan keeps the Soul the more backward from it: And let any experiencing Christian reflect upon the days of their Ignorance, and the Beginnings of their spiritual Knowledge, they'll find, When Hearing and Prayer has been practised by them, yet serious Reading was greatly neglected, especially with an Expositor: A Duty establishing and comforting a Christian, is the Duty Satan loses most by; to Read matter indifferent, overcomes neither Satan nor Corruption, but Scripture-Revelation discovers both in their natural Colours, and a way to escape the Tyranny of either. I remember the neglect of Reading the Scripture while only under the power of Religious Education, kept me in
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darkness and security for not bringing the false hopes of the goodness of my spiritual State to the Touch; I presum'd that I was in a safe condition, but by serious Reading the Scripture I had a true discovery of God and my self, and I delighted in the discovery and the blessed means of it: That which before was so unpleasant to the corrupt Nature, was sweeter than the Honey-Comb; This is the usual Reward that is joyn'd with our Obedience to the Divine Command, *Of searching the Scriptures.*

I am afraid the neglect of this Duty keeps not only prophane and meer professing Christians from a change to a state of real Christianity, but even real Christians in a careless neglect of their Conversations; The serious Reading a Chapter in the morning would so fix the matter upon the Christian's Thoughts, that now and then he would be reflecting, whether he has stept aside from Conformity to what he had Read in the morning, and would make him watchful against Temptations that surrounded him, lest he be surpris'd by them. How sad is the carelessness even of real Christians, with respect to the inward frame of their Souls, and their outward Conversation, which I do believe may in some measure proceed from the neglect, or at least the unserious performance of this Duty, and the not considering that God sees them in their Companies, in their Families, in their Closets, and in their
Hearts,

Hearts, and their neglect of serious yielding themselves to the conduct of the Holy Spirit thorough the day? I remember a passage I heard of a Minister, who had neglected his serious morning-Prayer before his going forth upon that Sacred Work of Preaching; and after Reading his Text, was slopt, that he could go on no further, and another was forc'd to supply in his room; and upon review, found that his neglect of Praying for Divine Assistance, and dependance upon it, was the cause why he was so deserted. If Christians were more concerned to have their morning Duties strictly perform'd, their Conversations would be strict and spiritual thorough the day, they would not disparage their Profession, and dishonour God by so many blemishes in their Actions; they would not so harden the prophane and meer titular Christians in their sinful state; whereas Prayer joyn'd with the Reading the Word in the morning, is a blessed means to maintain our Communion with God in all the business and lawful refreshments of the day.

If innocent Recreations, by fixing our thoughts upon them, or by reason of the length of time we are in them, lessen our seriousness, we should be less frequent and shorter in them; let the Conversation be never so innocent, and the Company never so dear, they must not deprive us of communion with Heaven, we must so use the world as we may enjoy God. I think
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visiting of Friends a Duty, as well as diversion; but prolonged to a day, or an afternoon, meddling in others affairs, censuring some, and commending others, perhaps without reason, is grieving to a spiritual-minded Christian, unless where he may either do or receive some spiritual good. The serious exercise of our minds upon spiritual things, and discourse of them, preserves the sacred fire burning in our breasts. **Spiritual Conversation** is as rare amongst Christians as it's profitable; it's the beginning of Heaven, and reduces friendship to the state of Paradise: But we are so sadly declin'd, that unless he is a person of eminent holiness and gravity that interposes divine discourse in Conversation, it's entertained very coldly, or with contempt and derision.

As to Recreations doubtful amongst Christians, playing at Cards, and the like, whether lawful or unlawful, I think it is best to keep the judgment free from entangling Scruples, but to restrain our practice, and accordingly I desire to order my Conversation, and that for these three Reasons.

I. Because since nothing in Christ's Commands or Example, or of the Apostles, is express herein, I judge it best to regulate my practice by the example of the most holy and heavenly Christians, who I know have abstained from Recreations of a suspected nature.

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A second Reason to me is, That Recreations, though seeming innocent, have often been, and are dangerous snares to men. How many have resolved to spend an hour in a Recreation, and have spent many, to the irreparable loss of precious time! How many have begun with Pence, and ended with Pounds, to the wasting their Estates, and impoverishing of Families! The perfect forbearance from such allurements, is our security and happiness; and that others who allow themselves in such things are not overcome, is from restraining Grace, and not from corrupt Nature.

Thirdly, Because to my own experience such things wither a heavenly spiritual frame of Soul, by drawing off the thoughts from seriousness, to a little levity, and from less to more, till a heavenly frame be gone. The heavenly-minded Christian is the only Judge of this matter, the prophane and meer Professor never having had a heavenly frame, can hardly be said to judge of, or be concern'd for its decay or removal; neither the lazy, though real Christian, who if serious in his morning or evening duties, matter not the want of a heavenly, serious frame of Soul throughout the day in his business and pleasures, of the number whereof too many abound in our Age, by reason whereof while under afflictions, or in their dying hours, when their evidences should shine not only with light

to themselves, but as witnesses for God to others, they appear more dark and clouded than in those whose life has been a continued enjoyment of God. How many real Christians have bitterly lamented their time mis-spent in Vanities, and when near Eternity, have had gloomy thoughts, and distracting doubts of the Eternal State; when those who have used the world with indifferent affections, and have been serious in working out their salvation, have rejoiced in the Lord. In short, a heavenly frame of Spirit, is the best Antidote against the infection of sensual pleasures.

The main Reasons to press Christians strictness of Conversation in doubtful things, are from pity to the prophane and meer Professor, and to prevent the drying up of spiritual seriousness of frame in real Christians; the latter sort, I hope, thorough the exercise of Grace, may limit their pleasures and diversions from being inductive of Sin: but the carnal are hardened in their profuse wasting time, and their indulging their sensual desires, even by Saints innocent Recreation of themselves in them, pleading for themselves by such a Question, Does not such an one do so and so?

Ministers, of all other Christians, should be very diligent to prevent a taking occasion and encouragement from their example, to Licentiousness in things of this kind; they have the best opportunity to spiritualize Conversation with their People, and improving time
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to the most excellent advantage; that is, to increase their knowledge, holiness and comfort. This was the practice of *Paul*, who was so great a Lover of Christ and Souls; this practice would refel the double Accusation of Ministers in our days.

First, That they are so much seen in the Affairs of the world, and are so little at home conversing with God and themselves, and seldom with their People, unless in outward enjoyments, and without spiritual profit to them.

Secondly, The other Accusation, is their ignorance of their Peoples spiritual state, and their more applying themselves to maintain such Doctrines as are the Characters of their Party, than to preach Truths suitable to the Case of the Congregations. Some Preachers are called Legal, others Evangelical, and according to the different opinions and affections of the Hearers, are censured or commended; but a Minister of the Gospel defames and pollutes his Profession, who does not make it his sole end to glorify Christ, and save Souls; and for that end the Law is to be preached, discovering the undone condition of Sinners, that they may come weary and heavy-laden to our compassionate Saviour, making him appear the more lovely to their view, that they may with unfeign'd willingness walk in those means wherein his Spirit may be found, to apply Christ with all his Benefits to the needy Soul.

I cannot but mention what I have observ'd in my self, that upon any stirring of corrupt nature, tending to puff me up after enjoy'd communion with God, or leaving a kind of security in the following Duties, what need I have had of reflecting upon the Law, shewing thereby to my self how insufficient I was to give full obedience thereto, or to perform any one part thereof aright, unless by the continued assistance of a Divine Spirit to be obtain'd in the use of means; and therefore it is Duty to be in the close work of using means, and to ascribe benefit obtained therein to the free and powerful Grace of God, and not to any dispositions or strength of our own: Therefore the meditation of Law and Grace must be join'd, the first leads to the other, and greatly discovers the efficacy thereof; yea, more than that, contemplated alone, shall I see the precious excellency of Christ, and not see my lost, corrupted, deprav'd state? Shall I see the need of a Divine Power in working and planting Grace, not seeing my own insufficiency to act without it? Again, before the close of the same evening, I have been brought under such concern for one failure or other, that the necessity and excellency of the free-grace of God in Christ has convincingly and comfortably by serious reflection wanted to have been appli'd to my Soul, shall therefore one Christian need the bearing home of both the Law of God and the Free-grace of God in Christ in one day, how much
more

more shall a Congregation made up of Christians, whereof some are secure, and others tender and self-condemning, stand in need of Sermons of both sorts, or of a Sermon made up of both.

It is therefore the great Duty of Ministers to be frequent and fervent in their Prayers to God, that by Divine influence they may be directed in the choice of fit Subjects, and assisted in their preparatory Studies, and in their preaching the Word, in demonstration of the Spirit, *1 Cor. 2.*

4. *Not with enticing words only of man's wisdom*, that it may be beneficial and saving to their Hearers; the neglect of this method may occasion the choice of an unsuitable Subject, and its delivery to be unfavoury, unless to the meer Notional Christian. A Minister of eminent Holiness told me, That Converse with God in Prayer was his best preparation for preaching; and that according to his frame in Prayer in the Lord's-day morning, such was the frame of his heart in preaching. I have my self found, that according to the holy exercise of my affections in my Closet-Prayer, such has been my enjoyment of God in publick Ordinances, and especially in receiving the Sacrament.

The Professors of serious Religion, but especially Ministers, are more in the view of the world, and more obvious to Censure, therefore they should be very regular in their Conversations, and watchful to prevent reproach upon Religion.

If a Divine Spirit once meet you in the use of these three means, you will find that whereas you have formerly enjoyed the good things of this world without thankful thoughts of the bestower of them, and of his rich mercy distinguishing you from others in a lower condition ; and without serious consideration that they are Talents committed to your trust, to be improved for his honour, and for which a strict account must be given ; you will, by the observation of God's general and special Providence, acknowledge him to be the Fountain of all your blessings, and depend upon his condescending care of you in the use of due means, and employ his benefits for his glory ; a sweet effect of observation !

You that pray'd, because by Parents you were instructed, commanded, and had their example to move you to it, will find that now you pray in obedience to God's Command, as the blessed mean of acquaintance and fellowship with him ; and that if you express your self with never so free and learned utterance, you are uneasy, unless the frame of your minds has been serious, and your affections heavenly and spiritual ; and you have some hope that he is pleased with your performance, and has evidenced his acceptance. There are not only many who are not at the pains to use means to come to such a comfortable knowledge , but who will hardly observe whether ever they
enjoyed

enjoyed the return of such a Prayer, unless the return has come in soon after, or in such a remarkable way, that they could not but see it was a return to that Prayer, by reason of which negligence God is sometimes pleased to defer a desired return ; but at last, in compassion to his Children, gives a remarkable Answer that deeply affects them, and is for their great advantage.

You that read the Scriptures, because your Parents led you into the road of a Chapter morning or evening, or for the historical part thereof, or to be knowing in the Notion of it for Conversation, now find that your use of it is a mean for the right knowledge of God, the comprehension of his Divine Truths, and as a Directory to your life, and as a help to your evidences, in comparing your life to it, and as a preservative from infectious Errors.

You that heard Sermons, and appear'd serious all the while for fear of Reproach, or to obtain a good Name, without any thoughtfulness of the matter discours'd, unless to pass a judgment of the ingeniousness or dulness of the Preacher, and to entertain Company with Reflections upon the matter or manner of his Preaching, find now such an inward change, that every Sermon is transmitted to your hearts thorough your ear, producing a Reflection upon it, and a comparing it with your own experience.

perience. I think nothing can be more pleasing than in hearing a Minister, or in reading a Chapter, to be able to seal the truth of either from our experience. Instead of examining the words of a Sermon as to the Rhetorick, you now mind the matter it self, not so much if learnedly manag'd, as to consider whether you have experienced its Truths, which will be a comfortable evidence to the Soul; or if you have not felt its efficacy, it will excite earnest Prayer to God that he would make the instruction powerful in you.

O how reproving is this of the Prophane, who slight the constant attending to the preaching of the Word, it being unknown to them when and how God may work by it upon their hearts, the neglect of a Sermon may be the loss of an eternal Blessing.

You that before convertst about Religion in the Letter and Notion, speak now your own experience; You that aim'd at Reputation for your knowledge in Divine Things, now design Honour to God, and the Confirmation of the reality of revealed Religion; You that aimed at worldly Interest, now you aim at the enlarging of Christ's Kingdom; where greatest Sincerity reigns, Self-applause is least valued, and greatest privacy sought for, unless where God may be publickly honour'd. The great and solemn Judgment at the last day, will pass
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sentence of Condemnation upon many, whose character on earth was not disputed, and were reputed holy, and will acquit those whose fellowship on earth was with God, and yet traduced as Hypocrites.

You that before ript open the Faults of others, either from a corrupt Principle of reproaching, inherent in the very nature of some more than others, or from a desire of raising your Reputation by the depressing others, you'll compassionately bear with the infirmities of others, knowing your own frailty.

You, who before affected only such Professors as were of your own Opinion, will now extend your Charity to all who believe the great Truths of the Gospel, and live accordingly.

Can the World imagine otherwise, but that those who press hard after strictness of Conversation, by avoiding all liberty that may be an occasion to Sin, have not the same natural corrupted Inclinations and Principles as others, but they are cleansed and changed by power from above. A rational Principle, produces a rational Action. A sensitive Principle, produces a sensitive Action. A corrupted Principle, produces a corrupted Action. A gracious Principle, produces a gracious Action; according therefore to the dominion of the inward Principle,

ciple, so the outward Action is, or at least the Inclination towards it. The Soul formerly under a Principle of Sin was enclin'd to sin; and upon the occurrence of any Object to set this a moving, the Soul was acted; but now under the dominion of a Principle of Grace upon the occurrence of any good Object, the gracious Inclination is active, and with greater pleasure, than under the power of the carnal Principle. Prophane persons, and strangers to the life of God, are utterly mistaken to think that the Actions of the spiritual life are not mixt with the sweetest and most satisfying delight. The outward Acts of Religion, if they are not produced from a Principle of Life, are without relish, and toilsom to the carnal Nature; but flowing from an inward and real Principle, they are productive of the most solid and purest pleasure in the present exercise, and in the joyful reflection, and are the beginnings of heavenly fruition.

I have thought, that to represent this with the greatest illustration, is of no force without a method proposed to bring it to men's Experience; that Proverb reigning amongst prophane and meer Professors, That *seeing is believing*; let therefore feeling in the Soul be believing: The days have been, when in all the outward parts of God's Worship I have made a specious show, but from no other principle than that of Education, being altogether ignorant

ignorant of any inward Comfort in Duties, and without longing after it, imagining it to be more talkt of than really enjoy'd ; This cannot have been my case alone, but I dare say, the case of many professing Christians who have had Religious Education ; and therefore my method has been, not only to show the evidences of a Change, but the steps of God's way thereto, and the few easie means made use of by my self, and successfully blessed by the Divine Spirit : And if this be not the fruit of my labour, to bring you to the use of these means, that you may lay your self in the way of receiving Divine Influences, my Experience will make but small impression ; but if the Lord accompany your sincere endeavour in these few means, believe me, the internal sweetness of inward Religion, of fellowship with God in Prayer, of Reading the Scriptures with improvement, of observing God's Dispensations, with Reliance upon him for all things, will so affect you, that you will need no other motive to persevere in the use of means, and you will abstain from all carnal Diversions that alienate the Heart from Communion with God. The preserving a spiritual frame in the Soul every day keeps us watchful, lest Temptations should break in, and Corruptions break out. This affords us a foretaste of Heaven, and an assurance of it ; who can doubt of the Hell that is reveal'd in Scripture, who feels the tormenting fire of guilt, and extends his Fears

to Eternity? These are the beginnings of Sorrow. Who can doubt of the Heaven reveal'd in the Gospel, who has felt in his Soul a Joy unspeakable and glorious, and differing from the Joy in Heaven only in the degree, and the manner of Divine Fruition?

I do believe, the Conceptions of prophane stupid Sinners, concerning spiritual Comfort in the Soul, and concerning inward Agonies for Sin, are as doubtful as they are of the reality of Heaven and Hell in the future State. Oh! Therefore let not Christians be discouraged by the Atheism, the Infidelity, and Wickedness of this Age, but let them pray and labour to obtain a more full experimental sense of things reveal'd by the Word of God, which will be a powerful preservative from the Errors and Vices of the infectious World, and will make them admire Divine Grace that distinguishes them from others, and will make them compassionate those who are careless of things that concern their precious and immortal Souls: And to preserve a spiritual frame in its liveliness and vigour, let those be our chosen and intimate Friends in whom the Image of God shines, who partake of a Divine Nature that declares it self in spiritual Communion, where we may be confirm'd and comforted in the serious practice of Godliness, and prepared for the Joy that flows from the Divine presence above, to the blessed Celestial Society.

Besides

Besides these three means, of right Observation, right Prayer, and right Reading of the Scriptures, there are other means of God's own appointment; such as the Hearing of God's Word, the Participation of the Lord's Supper, and Communion with Saints; but I have confin'd my self to these three upon the following Accounts.

First, Because Observation was the means of my own sensible Conversion, and the other two the special means of further growth in Grace.

Secondly, By reason of the Christian's tendency to the right and continued performance of the other means, when excited and allured by the Enjoyments that attend the right performance of those three.

Thirdly, That my invitation to the profane and meer professing Christian may meet the sooner with successful acceptance, the apprehension of the difficulty, and of the burthen of real Christianity, as if it were inconsistent with natural pleasant enjoyments, frights many from the acceptance of the Gospel, and Obedience to it; the falshood whereof I have endeavoured to shew, in that spiritual Religion allows a modest temperate use of sensitive Pleasures; and Religion when seriously practised,
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sweetens those Duties which to Carnalists are so uneasie; for when the Soul is cleans'd from sinful Affections, and chang'd into the Divine likeness, the suitableness between the Duties of Religion and the Soul, causes the purest pleasure: Since our Redeemer had reconciled God by his Meritorious Sufferings and Mediation, and has obtain'd such precious privileges for all that will accept of him, our present Pardon and future Glory, Holiness and Happiness in perfection; How can reasonable Creatures neglect the great Salvation so dearly bought, and so freely offered to them in the use of so easie and few means? Methinks we should hear convinc'd and alarm'd Sinners cry out, *What shall we do to be saved?* and apply themselves to the Redeemer, to obtain spiritual and eternal Life by him: The Pearl of Price is offered to all that sincerely accept of it.

To press the Duties of Christianity upon a prophane and meer professing Christian, is as if Food was offered to a Dead Body to receive and digest, as if the carrying of heavy Burthens were recommended in exchange with an easie, quiet, and pleasant course of life. The prophane Creature is Dead in Sin; though his Ear be open as the effect of natural Life, yet his Soul is shut from the reception of spiritual Truths, as the effect of a spiritual Death:

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Now to shut up all, I'll give you my repeated Exhortation, with some Reflections annexed to it, respecting the foregoing Discourse.

Be exhorted therefore, O prophane, meer professor and careless Christian, to walk in the use of the three means mention'd, and take an estimate of your performance, from the extensiveness of your observing the passages of Providence, from the spirituality of your Prayer, solemn or ejaculatory, from the strictness of your conformity to God's Word, the Rule of Obedience, and you will obtain the first life of Grace, and an experimental encrease of Holiness and Joy.

The world is blinded and secure, from Lusts that darken the Mind, and from tempting objects in the world that divert from the serious thoughts of the righteous God, who is terrible against Rebellious Sinners: Now the observing of visible Vengeance that often falls upon the wicked, will strike men with the fear of God, which is the first motive to fly to his Mercy.

Or men are blinded and secure upon the account of external profession and outward performance of Christian Duties, and a notional Knowledge of the Gospel. The remedy of this destructive delusion, is the frequent
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and serious addressing to God by Prayer; to obtain a living principle of Holiness that will be permanent and powerful in the Soul.

There are real Christians, who by neglect of their Duty, decline from God, and discourage their Profession; Let such be excited to a constant and serious use of those means whereby Grace is convey'd into our Souls. If they will observe God in all his ways more strictly, and pray more frequently and fervently, and read and hear the Word with more application, they will feel the power of Godliness reviving in their Souls, and will shew forth the beauty of Holiness in their Conversation, which will be convincing of others, that Religion is a Divine disposition productive of fruits suitable to it; A holy habit of Soul may be preserv'd in the business and diversions of the world, by our constant converse with Heaven every day.

You have two excellent motives to this Exhortation :

First, Because it may be done without any hindrance to your business and lawful diversions : How easie is it in the morning, before you enter into worldly Affairs, to read a Chapter with *Pool's* Annotations, and to give your selves and all your concerns by Prayer to the conduct of a Divine Hand to direct and succeed your lawful Endeavours? How easie is it

it thorough the day, while in the midst and course of your lawful business, to direct an ejaculatory desire, Lord, Let my endeavour be according to Duty on my part, and accompanied with a discovery of Mercy in the Event; and according to the many endeavours you are active in throughout a day, so many Ejaculatory Petitions in a serious frame to be repeated, which you'll observe to issue in great inward Knowledge, and perhaps great success to business, as an occasion of turning your many and various Ejaculatory Petitions to one solemn Duty of Praise in the evening.

How easy is it in an evening in your Shops or Closets to record, that in such an endeavour you were kept serious with God in your thoughts, and you were blest accordingly! The remembrance whereof will make you ready in all your Affairs to pray for the Divine Blessing, and depend upon God in doing your Duty, and thankful for his succeeding your endeavours.

The second is, That this constant looking to God in Prayer ejaculatory or solemn, with the use of means, will enable us to perform the works of our ordinary Callings with less trouble to our Mind, and toil to our Bodies: This will cure the anxiety of our Minds concerning the Event, and consequently make us more moderate and orderly in the use of means. It is the anxious desire of obtaining an Event, the great fear of losing it, that sets peoples minds on the rack to contrive means, and their Bodies on the hurry to

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use these means, and how often does unsuccessfulness accompany both? Whereas by Observation of God, the Governor of all things, access to him for his favour in any thing is discovered to the Soul, and that the dutiful use of means is successful by his favour, when the eager pursuit of a desir'd thing has been ineffectual. This has been verified to all by many Experiences, and therefore shall add this Advice as the sum of all.

To use means with the same diligence, as if by them alone, without a Divine Hand, Events were to be obtain'd.

To eye God with a reliance upon him for Events, as much as if they were to be brought forth by him without the use of means.

By which Rule I would reprove the Censures against God's Children, who from their dutiful diligence in business, without the intermixture of pleasure in fear of losing providential opportunities in it, are reputed Covetous; And advise others to judge themselves by their inward aims, if conform to God's Will; and whatever be the Censure of Men, they thereby prevent the condemning sentence of Christ the Redeemer and Judge. It is neither the Character or Censure of any, that ought to bound our Endeavours, but the being in Duty or out of Duty, and the regarding of the Lord in all our ways.

Reflections that must naturally follow the perusal of what is written.

First, **T**HAT the Author having felt such Experience of an inward change upon his Soul, without any other hand of his own therein, than the use of the means above recited, Ought I not to believe there is a Knowledge above human Judgment, and a power above natural Strength? for otherwise he had continued in the same ignorance of God, then appearing sufficient knowledge, wherein he was involv'd for many years, tho' enjoying the outward dispensation of the Gospel.

Secondly, That it was but suitable to Christian Affection in him to endeavour that others may tread in the same steps with the same success, especially finding some Ministers in their Sermons to run from plainness and experience, to Rhetorick and Notion, and finding the care of Christians more to run out upon arguing the Notions of Religion, than the confirming Divine Truths, and the establishing the Minds of others by the Seals of their own Experience: If experimental Religion was more Taught in Sermons, and Discourt of amongst Christians, the performance of Holy Duties wherein it's obtain'd, would not be thought a meer fancy, and the light and beauty of Grace would more shine in the Church of Christ.

A *Third* Meditation ensuing upon the second, may be, Whether you have not some longings after the same establishing Experiences? If you have, these longings may be kindled by the consideration of their being attainable. I was once so carnal as only to look to things seen, and thought the Reliance upon an unseen Superiour power to be a vain imagination; but God in his excellent Mercy has convinc'd me beyond all doubt of his governing Providence, that disposes of Events for the good of those who wait upon him; and the same goodness will be extended to all that sincerely seek his face for ever.

We must regard the Word as our Rule, the Spirit as our Guide, to direct us by that Rule, and the Dispensations of Providence correspondent to that Rule, and we shall be preserv'd from the Atheistical neglect of God, and from the fancies and phrensies of those who pretend to Inspiration from above, and from doing those things which are directly and scandalously contrary to the reveal'd Will of God. O that Christians would earnestly pray for the Holy Spirit, that by his directing-light they may understand the Scriptures; and by his warm impressing them on their Hearts, they may feel their cleansing and comforting power; but truly, Christians in our day are not much concerned to mind and try the work of God in their own Souls, nor seek after knowledge of him by his Operations in others. The Observations of our selves, and the Communion of Saints, are rare Duties:

Duties: We live at a distance from our selves; and in converse with others, the subject of our discourse is the present World, or Notional Religion; which occasions Dissention and Faction; whereas the mutual communicating of Christians to one another what God has done for their Souls, and how variously according to their wants, their desires, their sorrows and fears, he has attempered his Dispensations, would be an excellent means to raise their admiration of his condescending and compassionate Goodness, and of his Wisdom, and establish their joyful trust in him.

Fourthly, If you have any longing, and find it attainable, can you have easier means? Inward Religion affords no Lesson for emaciating your Bodies with outward Fastings, but commands a rational and moderate support of our Bodies, fitting them the more for serving God. We are not enjoyn'd to be Pilgrims, and to take wearisom Journies as a Penance for Sin; Christian Society and Communion will make us more watchful against Sin. The Gospel does not enjoyn severity and niceties in outward Conversation, which rather discourages than invites those who are without; but allows a civil sweetness to all; but there are Seasons of Retirement and Recollection from the business and pleasures of the World, which a Christian ought to improve for more immediate Fellowship with God. There are chosen hours, wherein the Soul ascends to God by solemn
S 3 Thoughts

Thoughts and ardent Desires, and God descends into the soul by the Excitations of his Graces, and the Influences of Joy ; and it is most unreasonable to think Religion to be sowre and unpleasant, because wise and holy Christians prefer God before the Creature, and Heaven before the Earth. Begin therefore, and go on in the right way, with steady Resolutions not to stand still, or draw back, and you will have renewed Strength and Comfort afforded, you will be advancing every day in your Journey, till you arrive at the Celestial *Canaan*.

Fifthly, Reflect not only upon the easiness of your means, but also upon the certainty and comfort of obtaining your end of Holiness here, and Happiness hereafter by them. How are you able to spend your spirits upon Notions that have no other foundation than depraved Reason, and little other design than Self-Appause, and the Character of Learned, or Leader of such a Party? Let it be the great Work of Ministers to preach those Truths whereby we may have Communion with the Lord crucified here, and with him glorified hereafter ; and thereby the Souls of the people will be confirmed in the blessed hope.

God has given an account of his Truths to be believed and obeyed, yea, to be try'd ; and the more strict and particular the Enquiry is, the more certain of our Profession here, and of our Priviledge hereafter. It is superficial knowledge of Religion, that occasions uncertainty in our selves ; but an inward serious sense of its
Power,

Power, will fortify us against all the fiery Darts of Satan.

Be at certainty therefore of your Persuasion here; and as to your Inheritance hereafter, I shall add this, Who that sincerely and with perseverance pray'd for the Spirit of Truth, that read and heard the Word with attention and application, yet has remained in darkness and distracting doubts about eternal things, God will make good his Promise, Those that seek him shall praise him for the Revelation of his Goodness to them.

Sixthly, Let this be the Reflection of the Reader of these Papers; What Excuse at Christ's Tribunal can I make, either for the ignorance of my mind as to the Truth of Christianity, or the looseness of Conversation from God's Divine Rule, after reading the great things in the Change of this Author's Soul; the few and easy means that led him to it? Can you think any thing else, but as it witnesses for God on earth, so it will witness against you above, and aggravate your Sin and Punishment? Light came into the world; others comprehended it, walk'd in it; the Light that truly might obtain the Inheritance of the Saints in light; but you chose rather to walk in darkness. If you now think it not worth your while to endeavour the means of obtaining such a Pearl of Price, as the true knowledge of Christianity, and its Practice on earth, and perfect Holiness and Happiness above, the reward of it, you may walk on under a Cloud of Delusion, but

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you will find, that inward Darkneſs will bring you to outer Darkneſs, in an everlaſting Hell.

Seventhly, Let therefore your Meditations iſſue here; I will in the ſtrength of God begin the uſe of theſe Three Means, according to the Preſcription of this Witneſs for God; and I will try whether I find the ſame Experiences, or others as marvellous, or more ſuited to my Caſe, it being poſſible for me to uſe theſe three means, when hearing the Word, taking the Sacrament, and communion with Saints are deni'd me, yea, eaſy and pleaſant, to admix them in all my buſineſs and pleaſures.

To encourage which Reſolution, I ſhall ſubjoin the following Directory as a means of keeping up conſtant fellowſhip with God, and your ſelves; and as a Bulwark againſt the Prophanity and Error of the Age.

LET me previously bring to your thoughts what has been already treated of, to wit, three Methods of God's conducting his Children thorough this lower life, The conduct of his revealed Will in the Scriptures, Of his divine Providence without, And of his divine Spirit by his workings in the Soul; anſwerable to which three Methods of condeſcending power and love, three Duties have been propoſed as means to be intereſted in this three-fold divine bleſſing; Obſervation of outward Providences, as a help to know and to believe in his general and ſpecial Providence round the created and adopted ſons of God;
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serious Prayer as a help to know, to experience the certainty of the spiritual operations of a divine spirit in the soul ; Reading the Scripture with *Pool's* Annotations, a help to know notionally God's Will, and experimentally to know it as Truth made out in his way of Providence, and inward workings in the soul. As necessary therefore to guide you to the right and continued use of these three easy Duties interesting the soul in these three marvellous blessings for which the Godhead will be admir'd, lov'd and prais'd in our eternal state, I give you my own course thorough a day as what has kept my self in constant heavenliness of frame, and afforded me the astonishing enjoyments of Grace, and that with so great ease to lawful business and diversions. Your knowing my hurrying affairs, and the enjoyments of Grace I have experienc'd and given forth now to the world, would be sufficiently convincing how easy and how comfortable (no ways detracting from diligence in business, or lawful recreations) this blessed life of Religion is ; and since I am not to be known, I desire to impart the way I walk in for your imitation, and soon you'll be convinc'd of the reality and sweetness of inward Christianity, however the meer profession thereof expose it to the Censure of others as burden, melancholy, and the like.

The Day is to be divided in three parts ; the Morning, the Course of the Day, and the Evening : The Evening I appropriate principally to the exercise of that Noble Faculty of
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the Soul, Even-Reflection; the two former parts principally to Apprehension and Observation.

First therefore, After awaking, or in the time of dressing, observe the frame of your Souls, whether serious, or not; whether it seems to be the bent of your mind to think upon God and your Duties to him, or whether there wants a force upon your soul thereto.

Secondly, After dressing, begin your Morning Duties with reading a Psalm or a Chapter, by *Pool's* Annotations; observe the Words and Sentences thereof, that impress your minds most, with serious advertency to them; observe the thoughts that thence arise at the time; if tending to explain what formerly you were ignorant of; if tending to establish you in what formerly you had the knowledge of; if tending to make you resolve you'll conform to it; or if tending to comfort you, as having walk'd conform to it, and thereby discovering your self in the reading such a Portion of Scripture.

Thirdly, Enter upon private Prayer with a serious Acknowledgment of God's Favour in conducting you through the Night; and with a sincere Supplication to him for his conduct thro' the Day, by his special Providence and Spirit; that from the evidence of both thorough the Day, you may discover his special Favour to your souls as a comfortable evening Cordial; and that by his supplies of Grace throughout the day, you may be enabled to bring forth the blessed Improvement of both, by the exercise of Trust in, and Love to the Godhead, for life and salvation.

Observe

Observe your frame of soul throughout this Prayer; observe if it continue in the same degree of seriousness throughout the whole, or vary according to the various Petitions put up: Observe and record the different Frames and different Petitions.

Fourthly, Go forth thus prepared, to your lawful Business and Conversation.

In your Business through the day, observe,
First, The Passages of Providence that seem to bring Undertakings to your hand.

Secondly, Observe your own Endeavour in the use of Means. And

Thirdly, The Event of each Undertaking.

In your Conversation through the day, observe,

1. The Occasions of your Entrance into it, whether Idleness, Lust within, Necessity, or Recreation.

2. The Frame of your Mind while in it, whether on your watch against the evils thereof.

And 3. The Issue of it, whether freedom from, or commission of Sins.

But now in the evening of the day, Reflection according to the Observation and Record of the day, is the Duty preceding your last Closet Prayer, and to be recommended to your practice.

Perform it in the following Parts.

First, Reflect upon the frame of your Souls that you observ'd in the morning, whether by the Duties of Reading, and Prayer, it was not brought to a seriousness, if observ'd to be unserious; or to a greater seriousness than the degree of seriousness at first observ'd, yea perhaps to great Heavenliness. The

The improvement whereof must needs be, that it is good to draw near to God in the Duties he has prescrib'd, and a fix'd resolution to walk therein, and perhaps daily continuance may bring in daily additions of the Enjoyments of Grace, and preserve the Christian in daily heavenliness of Soul, as Bulwark against all the Temptations of the day, with Honour to God, and great inward Peace.

Secondly, Reflect upon the passages of Providence round you through the day; and,

First of all, compare them to the parts of the Scripture you read in the morning, and to the Thoughts that then most impress your Minds, to see whether or not these passages of Divine Providence afford you some discovery of the reality of that part of the Scripture thus observ'd, establishing your Faith in it.

The improvement whereof must needs be a resolution to go on in the same Duty of reading the Scripture in the morning before the entering upon the business of the day, and perhaps there will arise to your sensible Experience, greater knowledge of God's Word than ever yet has been observ'd by you in the enjoyment of outward Instruction; yea, such establishment to its truth and reality, as could not be brought forth by the strongest arguings of the most Learn'd, and into which the strongest Dart of Erroneous Sophistry can never pierce; enabling your Soul not only to see the Reality, but even Harmony of God's Word to his Providence and Spirit.

Secondly,

Secondly, Compare the Providences of the Day, to your Morning-Duty of Closet-Prayer, to the Petitions therein put up, and to the frame of Soul you were then under, that you may discover what Passages of Providence seem to be afforded you in return to Prayer, and what Frame your Soul was in, and what was your Utterance in that Prayer, or part thereof, that was return'd.

The improvement whereof must needs be a discovery of the Certainty of Access to God by Prayer, and a Desire to be always in that Frame wherein you was, when you pray'd that Prayer that is so visibly return'd. It will help you to see a difference between one kind of Prayer and another; between a Prayer with our own Spirit, and with the Spirit of Christ; between a Prayer with the Spirit of Christ enabling to ask sincerely, and a Prayer with the Spirit of Christ, giving the Soul the comfortable sense of it as such; and discovering the Reality of a Divine Strength above our selves, both bringing the Providences of the day to us, and bringing forth the improvement thereof in us, by a gradual advancement of reliance upon, and love to the free Grace of God in Christ, by whose satisfaction this once-seal'd Fountain is open'd, and by whose Spirit its Waters of Spiritual Life continually flow upon us, and in the use of Duties apply'd to us.

Thirdly, Reflect upon your own way of managing Business and Conversation with others; that so you may not only discover a special Providence round you, but the actings of a Divine Spirit within you; and that by comparing,

First, Your Frame of Soul, to the Passages of Providence laying Undertakings in your way, through the day; reflecting whether God was observed in bringing them about, as a discovery of
Divine

Divine Strength in you, carrying your observation beyond the enjoyment, even to God himself.

Secondly, By comparing your Frame of Soul, to your method of using Means, and managing Endeavours thus providentially laid in your way; not only whether God was regarded therein, laying Providences in your way, or helping you to observe him; but whether your concern run out chiefly upon doing Duty, neither designing ill ends, nor endeavouring to bring about any purpose in the use of ill means, but regarding Duty to him in all.

Thirdly, Compare your Frame of Soul to the Events of such Undertakings thus providentially laid in your way, and thus faithfully managed by you; if they are according to expectation, or better than expectation: Reflect whether exercise of the Grace of Love and Faith were not and ought not to be brought forth by such a Discovery, and a fix'd resolution to keep on in the same lawful use of means, with a trust to Divine Supply for Events; as full evidence of the working of Christ's Spirit in your Soul, and of your being under his Spiritual Conduct.

In Conversation with others,

1. Reflect upon your Entrance to it; whether its occasions were Necessity and innocent Recreation; with a previous Address for Divine Conduct in it.

2. Reflect upon your Carriage in it, thus prepared; the Temptations you met with therein, and the Strength you had to resist them; and that in answer to your Ejaculatory Prayer.

3. Reflect upon the Issue; whether it was freedom from being overcome by its Temptations, and that in return to ejaculated Thoughts for Divine Strength to preserve you, before entrance in it, or at the time you were engaged with it.

The Improvement of which Reflections must needs

needs be, A Resolution to enter no Society, but when under the constraint of lawful Business, or Recreation; and even then, with an eye to God in the use of Ejaculatory Prayer, either aforehand, or while in Conversation, for Strength to resist Temptations that may either endanger occasions to sin, or of losing a spiritual Frame.

Fourthly, Reflect upon the Failures of the Day, and what you have let pass unobserv'd; what Failures in your Business and Conversation have appear'd: If the eye of God has been as much regarded as the eye of the World: If the opportunity of Secresy has not clouded your fear of God: If you have kept your Tongues with a Christian Bridle, from Lying in telling Stories to divert Companions, or as Excuses for Faults: From Self-commendation, with an inward design to disparage others: From censuring others, especially Christians, and picking out somewhat in their life to make a discourse of to disparage their Profession, rather than endeavour their amendment by acquainting themselves therewith. And whatever in your Reflection you find has been amiss herein, let particular acknowledgment be made, that with the Psalmist, you may thereby escape the punishment of your particular Sins, and vow, not to repeat it, and tho repeated by you, forbear not your Resolutions and Endeavours against it; your unwilling breaches reflected upon, will bring you soon out of your selves to a Redeemer, and to cry for his Spirit to apply strength to your Souls to resist.

In reflection upon the passages of Providence through the day, and upon the strength conveyed by a Divine Spirit to your Souls, evident not only by your spiritual Frame in the Duties of the day, but in the Improvement of its Providences, by eying God in bringing them about, by regarding his Will
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in the use of Means, and trusting to him for Events, with a constant watch to ejaculatory Prayer against the Temptations of Company ; In reflection there-upon arises a fair and comfortable discovery of your being under three blessed Conducts, of God's Word, Providence, and Spirit, and is laid before you as your last Evening-duty, (e're your head lies down upon your Pillow) a private Prayer, blessing God for the discovery of his Love in his Word, Providence and Spirit, blessing him particularly for each particular step therein, and begging his further grace to be upheld in those means wherein he is pleased to discover so much of himself in strength and comfort to the Soul , above what is attainable by other helps or comforts in this life. Give therefore your selves up to God for conduct thorough the night, that if your eyes should never open more upon this earth, your Redeemer may find you laid at his Footstool as the last performance of your life, and may raise you up to that glorious dignity of being embraced into *Abraham's bosom* ; a blessed issue to such comfortable endeavours ! And however tedious this Directory may seem in its reading, yet I dare witness to this truth, that the person in the greatest hurries of outward Affairs, has time enough for this easy work, it being easily to be intermixt in the throng of Affairs ; and the more Affairs are laid in your way, the greater opportunity you have to observe God's Providence and his Spirit, and that built upon his blessed Word, as a Mean of keeping up the sense of God's Love in your Souls, and the sense of your love to him ; that so Communion with God may be your Life on earth , which will make you live comfortably, and dye triumphantly.

I can do no more but lay the way before you ; and the Lord himself give you strength to chuse it, and to walk in it.

